

Dar welcomes ceasefire

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar Tuesday said that Pakistan warmly welcomed today's ceasefire between Iran and Israel. On his X handle, the DPM/FM said Pakistan firmly believed that all disputes must be resolved in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and international law, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.



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PM calls Masoud

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday held a telephone conversation with President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, and reiterated Pakistan's support for Iran at all diplomatic forums, including at the UN Security Council and the OIC. During the telephonic conversation, the prime minister called for adherence to international law and the UN Charter principles.

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PM discusses ME situation with KSA, Qatari envoys

China lauds Pakistan's proactive role for peaceful settlement of regional security situation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The ambassadors of Saudi Arabia and Qatar on Tuesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and discussed the rapidly evolving situation in the Middle East, particularly after the Iranian attack on the US military base in Qatar.

"Met the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today and discussed the rapidly evolving situation in the Middle East... Pakistan will continue to work closely with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for peace in the region through dialogue and diplomacy," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline after meeting with Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al Malki.

The prime minister conveyed his prayers and good wishes for Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, as well as Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the brotherly people of Saudi Arabia.

In the meeting with

Ambassador of Qatar Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al-Khater, the prime minister expressed solidarity with the Amir and the people of Qatar following Monday night's attacks on US military base.

"We pray for the safety and security of our Qatari brothers and sisters, and the entire region," he remarked.

The prime minister said that Pakistan has always advocated dialogue and diplomacy as the only path to lasting peace in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also held a telephonic interaction with both the envoys on Monday night and expressed his serious concern over the reports of missile attacks on a US military base in Qatar.

He had urged that all efforts must be made to de-escalate tensions and restore peace in the region. The Qatari ambassador thanked the prime minister for immediately reaching out to him after this "most unfortunate development" as well as for the expression of solidarity at that critical time.

During the telephonic call with Saudi ambassador, the prime minister reiterated his call for de-escalation and restoration of peace in the region.

The Saudi envoy also

thanked the prime minister and agreed that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan must continue to work together and coordinate closely to ensure an early peaceful settlement of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

M e a n w h i l e , Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong on Tuesday lauded the proactive and positive role being played by Pakistan at every diplomatic forum, including at the United Nations Security Council, for a peaceful settlement of the regional security situation through dialogue and diplomacy.

The Chinese ambassador called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and discussed regional security situation, particularly recent developments in the Iran-Israel conflict, other bilateral issues.

The prime minister conveyed his warm regards and good wishes for President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

The prime minister extended his sincere best wishes for the successful holding of the upcoming SCO Summit. He acknowledged the ongoing consultations between the two sides concerning his visit to China to attend the Summit.

Recalling the historic, deep-rooted and iron-clad "All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" between Pakistan and China, the prime minister said that Pakistan was fully committed to continue working closely with China for the successful implementation of ongoing China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects.

In this regard, he highlighted key projects including ML-I, realignment of KKH, operationalization of Gwadar Port, as well as cooperation in agriculture, industrial and IT sectors.

The prime minister expressed Pakistan's deep appreciation for China's consistent financial and economic support that had helped to stabilize Pakistan's economy and resulted in the improvement of the macro-economic outlook of the country. This, he added, was vital to the government's socio-economic development agenda.

Amb. Jiang Zaidong briefed the prime minister on various aspects of Pakistan-China bilateral cooperation and said that preparations had already begun to ensure the success of the prime minister's upcoming visit to China in the end of August 2025.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China H.E. Jiang Zaidong called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Tuesday.

Eleven Indian-sponsored khwarij killed in Waziristan

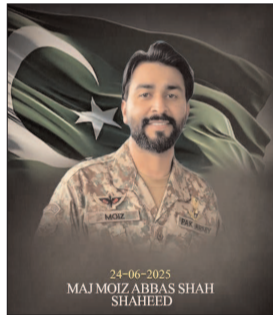
Two soldiers embrace martyrdom during operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces in an intelligence-based operation in general area Sararogha, South Waziristan District, killed eleven Indian-sponsored khwarij, while seven khwarij got injured.

"Security Forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in general area Sararogha, South Waziristan District, on reported presence of Khwarij belonging to Indian Proxy, Fitna al-Khwarij. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location and resultantly, eleven Indian-sponsored khwarij were sent to hell, while seven khwarij got injured", said an ISPR news release.

However, during the intense fire exchange, Major Syed Moiz Abbas Shah (age: 37 years, resident of District Chakwal), a brave officer who was leading his troops from the front, fought gallantly and paid the ultimate sacrifice along with another brave son of soil Lance Naik Jibrin Ullah (age: 27 years, resident of District Bannu).



24-06-2025
MAJ MOIZ ABBAS SHAH
SHAHEED



24-06-2025
LANC NAIK JIBRIAN ULLAH
SHAHEED

sonnel of the security forces for successfully carrying out an operation against the terrorists of Fitna al-Khwarij, operating under Indian patronage in South Waziristan, and sending 11 of them to hell.

The president and the prime minister paid tribute to Shaheed Major Syed Moiz Abbas Shah and Shaheed Lance Naik Jibranullah, who embraced martyrdom while defending the homeland and thwarting the nefarious designs of the enemy during the operation, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The president lauded the valour of the security forces for eliminating terrorists of Fitna al-Khwarij in the intelligence based operation, President Secretariat

Media Wing said in a press release.

The president and the prime minister prayed for the high ranks of the martyrs and grant of patience for the bereaved families.

President Zardari, while praising the bravery and patriotism of the shaheed personnel, said that the nation would always remember their sacrifices.

The entire nation, including him, was proud of their martyrs and their families, the prime minister said, adding the sacrifices of those who embraced martyrdom for the sake of the beloved homeland would not go in vain.

The president and the prime minister reiterated the resolve to continue the fight against the scourge of terrorism till its complete eradication.

The president said that their resolve to eliminate terrorist elements would remain firm.

The prime minister also expressed that in their unwavering resolve to defend the homeland, the entire nation, including him, stood shoulder to shoulder with their armed forces.

Trump says Israel-Iran ceasefire is in effect after deal initially faltered

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump said a ceasefire between Iran and Israel was in effect Tuesday after the deal initially faltered, and the American leader expressed deep frustration with both sides.

Israel had earlier accused Iran of launching missiles into its airspace after the truce was supposed to take effect, and the Israeli finance minister vowed that "Tehran will tremble."

The Iranian military denied firing on Israel, state media reported, but explosions boomed and sirens sounded across northern Israel in the morning, and an Israeli military official said two Iranian missiles were intercepted.

Trump told reporters at the White House before departing for a NATO summit that, in his view, both sides had violated the nascent agreement. He had particularly strong words for Israel, a close ally,

while suggesting Iran may have fired on the country by mistake.

But later he said the deal was saved.

"ISRAEL is not going to attack Iran. All planes will turn around and head home, while doing a friendly 'Plane Wave' to Iran. Nobody will be hurt, the Ceasefire is in effect!" Trump said in his Truth Social post.

Indeed, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he held off on tougher strikes against Iran after speaking to Trump.

The conflict, now in its 12th day, began with Israel targeting Iranian nuclear and military sites, saying it could not allow Tehran to develop atomic weapons and that it feared the Islamic Republic was close. Iran has long maintained that its program is peaceful.

Many worried the war might widen after the U.S. joined the attacks by dropping bunker-buster bombs

over the weekend and Israel expanded the kinds of targets it was hitting.

But after Tehran launched a limited retaliatory strike on a U.S. military base in Qatar on Monday, Trump announced the ceasefire.

The deal got off to a rocky start.

An Israeli military official who spoke on the condition of anonymity in line with military regulations said Iran launched two missiles at Israel hours into the tenuous ceasefire. Both were intercepted, the official said.

Iranian state television reported that the military denied firing missiles after the start of the ceasefire — while condemning Israel for predawn strikes of its own.

One of those attacks killed a high-profile nuclear scientist, Mohammad Reza Sedighi Saber, at his father-in-law's residence in northern Iran, Iranian state TV reported.

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Israel kills 40 in further Gaza bloodshed

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli forces killed at least 40 Palestinians in Gaza and ordered new evacuations on Tuesday, local medics and residents said, in further bloodshed shortly after Israel and Iran agreed to a ceasefirein their air war.

The Israel-Iran deal announced by U.S. President Donald Trump raised hopes among Palestinians of an end to over 20 months of war in Gaza that has widely demolished the territory and displaced most residents, with malnutrition widespread.

"Enough! The whole universe has let us down. (Iran-backed Lebanese group) Hezbollah reached a deal without Gaza, and now Iran has done the same," said Adel Farouk, 62, from Gaza City.

"We hope Gaza is next," he told Reuters via a chat app, speaking before two explosions rang out in Tehran, with Trump accusing both sides of violating the deal, though voicing particular unhappiness with Israel, rebuking it with an obscenity in an extraordinary outburst of frustration.

In Gaza, deadly violence continued with little respite.

Marwan Abu Naser, of the Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat in central Gaza, said it had received 19 dead and 146 injured from crowds who tried to reach a nearby aid distribution centre of the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

Abu Naser told Reuters the casualties resulted from gunfire.

Israel's military said that a gathering overnight was identified adjacent to forces operating in Gaza's central Netzarim Corridor, and it was reviewing reports of casualties.

Responding to a Reuters request for comment, the GHF said in an e-mail that there has been no incident near their aid site, which it added was located several kilometres south of the Netzarim Corridor.

Lahore High Court rejects Imran Khan's bail in May 9 cases

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday dismissed the bail applications of former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in eight cases related to the violent events of May 9, including the high-profile attack on the Corps Commander House in Lahore.

A two-member bench, led by Justice Shahbaz Ali Rizvi, announced the reserved verdict after hearing detailed arguments from both the defense and the prosecution.

Imran Khan had sought bail in eight separate cases stemming from the May 9 protests, which erupted following his arrest last year. The court had reserved its decision after concluding proceedings in the petitions.

Earlier, on November 27, 2024, an anti-terrorism court had already denied bail to the former premier in the same set of cases.

The rejection by the LHC marks another legal setback for Khan, who remains entangled in a slew of legal battles since being ousted from office in 2022.

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GAZA: Hamam Al-Farani sits next to his sister, in white, along with other family members as the body of their father Alaa, killed in an Israeli army strike that also injured the boy, is prepared for burial at Shifa hospital in Gaza City, on Tuesday. — AP photo

Saif meets PTI founder

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, met with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in a significant meeting focused on political developments and the provincial budget.

Barrister Dr. Saif stated that the meeting entailed a detailed discussion on various political matters, with a special emphasis on the legal and constitutional complexities surrounding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget.

He briefed Imran Khan on the potential consequences of not passing the budget within the constitutionally mandated timeframe.

"If the budget were not approved in time, it would

have resulted in serious constitutional and legal challenges," Dr. Saif explained. "This could have led to a situation where salaries could not be disbursed, and essential government expenditures could not be met."

He further apprised Imran Khan that failure to approve the budget would have pushed the province toward a financial and administrative crisis.

Barrister Dr. Saif also informed Imran Khan about opposition parties' possible maneuvers to block the budget's approval and disclosed details of a recent covert meeting held at the Governor House.

"The opposition had devised a comprehensive plan to prevent the budget from passing," he added. "To counter this, the KP government consulted legal experts and engaged in

extensive deliberations with the parliamentary party."

As a result of these consultations, the KP government decided to approve the budget conditionally. Dr. Saif mentioned that following a meeting between KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and Imran Khan, modifications to the budget may be introduced based on further guidance.

"Imran Khan expressed his consent for the budget's conditional approval and will issue instructions regarding its implementation during his meeting with the Chief Minister and Muzzammil Aslam," Dr. Saif stated. He also revealed that prior to his own meeting, permission was not being granted for the Chief Minister and Muzzammil Aslam to meet Imran Khan.

Karachi Mayor presents KMC budget

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab today presented the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) budget for the fiscal year 2025–26 in the City Council.

During his budget speech, the mayor stated that the decisions made over the past two years for the improvement, development, infrastructure restoration, and removal of encroachments in Karachi — along with the renovation of the city’s historical buildings — are now producing visible results for the citizens. He emphasized that difficult decisions were made in the past two years for the service of Karachi’s people.

He said that the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), which has always prioritized public service in its manifesto, has demonstrated that it is delivering better services to Karachi than in the past. Over the past two years, KMC has been put on a path toward financial stability — a task that was extremely difficult, if not impossible.

The 2025–26 budget is a reflection of the hard work, struggle, and consistency of the past two years and will be much improved compared to previous years. This budget includes development projects selected in consultation with honorable council members, reflecting the commitment to work for the broader and long-term interests of the city.

He said that Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari entrusted him and all local government members with important responsibilities for the city. Every effort has been made to fulfill the expectations of both the chairman and the people of Karachi. The PPP has proven that it is the only party that treats service as worship and knows how to resolve the city’s issues.

Presenting the Highlights of the budget the Mayor Karachi said that KMC employee salaries have been shifted to the World Bank’s SAP system. Retired employees’ pensions will also be integrated into SAP next, ensuring timely payments and tamper-proof records. He said after a long halt, MUCT (Municipal Utility Charges & Taxes) collection through K-Electric has resumed, with Rs1.7 billion collected so far this year. Next year, Rs3 to Rs3.5 billion is expected, which will aid infrastructure improvement and KMC’s financial self-sufficiency. Development without discrimination was carried out in all seven districts, including, A 1.5 km road connecting Lyari to the port and shipyard (Rs56 million), Overlay and patchwork on both tracks of Hub River Road (180,000 ft), Repairs and carpeting of Malir River Bridge and adjacent road from Anwar Baloch Hotel to Murghi Khana Bus Stop. Construction of a 1.4 km overhead bridge on Korangi Causeway.

He said Long-pending dues of retired and deceased KMC and DMC employees were addressed. Rs600 million was paid out, and all dues up to June 2018 have been cleared using KMC’s own revenues. Rs576 million was earned through investment and a total of Rs1.3 billion was disbursed — a KMC record. He said KMC is the first municipal body in Pakistan to begin converting its buildings to solar energy. Rs. 220.2 million has been allocated for this in the upcoming fiscal year, with plans to solarize markets, parks, and streetlights.

He said Renovations have been completed on Denso Hall, Khaliq Dina Hall, KMC Building, and Frere Hall. Next year, six more historical structures — including Empress Market, Muhammad Ali Hothi Market, Machhi Miani Market, and Lea Market — will be restored to their original form.

He said A modern meat section with 129 stalls has been established. A new parking area accommodating 300 cars and 300 motorcycles has been built. Similar parking development has begun in Bolton Market to address congestion. Rs7,298.559 million has been allocated for Medical & Health Services, with Rs124.650 million set aside for advanced medical and electrical equipment. He said The PPP increased UC grants from Rs500,000 to Rs1.2 million to empower chairmen and improve local service delivery. He said All members attending meetings will now receive Rs. 2,000 per session as travel allowance, including those on reserved seats and women members.

He said small and large parks have been restored and opened to the public. Bagh Ibn-e-Qasim will receive new amenities, including an art museum supported by a Rs. 100 million climate endowment funds. He said Cleaning of 46 major stormwater drains is underway. As of June 15, all plastic bags have been banned in Karachi due to their harmful environmental impact and drainage system blockage. Rs. 20 million has been allocated for eco-friendly electric bikes for employees to reduce pollution.



KARACHI: Mayor Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab is presenting the budget for the financial year 2025-26 in the meeting of the MC Council. —APP Photo

Hina assures full support for rape victim

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Women Protection Authority (PWPA) Hina Pervaiz Butt visited the house of a young Christian girl, who was raped in Manga Mandi area of Lahore, here on Tuesday.

According to the FIR, the girl was not only repeatedly sexually abused by her paternal uncle, but was also later handed over to other individuals. Hina Pervaiz Butt described the tragic incident as a grave attack on human values and the sanctity of familial bonds. She said the incident was enough to shake the collective conscience of society. “When a girl is subjected to such cruelty by a close relative and treated as a toy in the hands of others, the silence of the state becomes a crime,” she added.

The chairperson paid tribute to the police for the prompt arrest of all the main accused and said that the case is not just about the girl or her family, it is a case of conscience of the entire minority community and society.

Hina Pervaiz announced that the PWPA will provide complete legal, medical, psychological and social protection to the victim girl, and the case will remain under their direct supervision. “We will try our best to get the culprits punished as a party in the court,” she added.

The chairperson PWPA conveyed a message to the minority community, stating that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif’s vision is to make Punjab a safe place for women and minorities. “We will not back down even an inch from this mission. Whoever commits a crime will not escape the clutches of the law,” she concluded.

Ammar Afzal missing from Rawalpindi since April 21

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A young boy, Ammar Afzal, son of Muhammad Afzal Khattak, has been reported missing from Rawalpindi since April 21, 2025. According to the family, Ammar went missing under unknown circumstances and has not been seen or heard from since that day.

The family is deeply concerned for his safety and is requesting the public’s assistance in locating him. They urge anyone with information about his whereabouts to come forward immediately.

If you have seen Ammar or have any information that could help in finding him, please contact the family on the following numbers:

Afzal :+92 300 8508230
Ali : +92 334 9630305
Asif: +92 303 4507139



CM orders foolproof security for Ashura

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired a high-level meeting on Tuesday to review and finalize arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram, with a strong emphasis on ensuring foolproof security, religious harmony, and public welfare.

The CM issued clear directives for an emergency preparedness plan and ordered strict implementation of the code of conduct during Muharram. She categorically stated that there will be zero tolerance for any violation of these directives.

CM Maryam Nawaz called for the immediate arrest of individuals involved in spreading hate speech or inciting violence through social media. She also imposed a province-wide ban on banners, posters, wall chalking, and unauthorized drone activity, directing law enforcement to take swift action against violators. She instructed provincial ministers, commissioners, deputy commissioners, RPOs, and DPOs to personally supervise local arrangements and to visit religious scholars to

promote coordination and community engagement.

The CM directed the Punjab Safe Cities Authority to immediately repair all non-functional CCTV cameras and tasked the Special Monitoring Unit with identifying and reporting hate content. She also ordered mock security drills to test preparedness and directed the installation of standardized ‘sabeels’ (refreshment stations) along procession routes, with proper monitoring and the provision of lemon water, cold drinks, and bottled water for participants.

To mitigate the effects of extreme heat and humidity, CM Maryam Nawaz instructed authorities to install water sprinkling systems along procession routes and to establish mobile clinics and field hospitals. She further directed the implementation of an effective traffic management plan and real-time advisories, while ensuring timely water drainage in case of rainfall.

She called for the activation of systems like Hotel Eye and Travel Eye and emphasized the continuation

of combing operations. Procurement of anti-drone systems was also discussed to enhance surveillance capabilities. Highlighting the importance of strict SOPs enforcement, she directed WAPDA and related authorities to eliminate dangling power lines and ensure uninterrupted electricity and functioning streetlights throughout Muharram.

Expressing concern over recurring infrastructure issues, she censured responsible agencies for negligence, especially in relation to uncovered manholes and potholes on procession routes. She directed private housing societies to immediately fix sewerage covers in their areas. “All stakeholders must stay vigilant and united. The success of Operation Bayaan-ul-Marsous has disturbed hostile elements, and we must not allow them any opportunity to exploit the situation,” she said. She instructed cabinet members to ensure effective implementation in their respective districts and involve all stakeholders in decision-making.

Rs. 1,280 bln development budget a testament to good governance: Marriyum

LAHORE (APP): Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that the historic Rs. 1,280 billion development budget presented by the Punjab government is not just a financial document, but a practical reflection of the government’s performance, vision, and unwavering commitment to public welfare.

Addressing a session of Punjab Assembly here on Tuesday, she emphasized that Punjab’s development journey has entered a new era under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, with 3,000

new projects launched across various sectors. She noted that the donor loan model has been effectively restructured to just 5.2 percent and debt repayments reduced by 90 percent. Additionally, zero-tax economic models are now operational in 19 districts, signaling major fiscal reforms aimed at sustainable growth.

She opened her address by commending Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for their exemplary leadership in peacefully resolving a recent regional crisis. She lauded the Pakistan Army for its valor and unity,

calling their response a shining example of national solidarity and supreme sacrifice. She also praised Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for her firm leadership during this critical time.

Reviewing the government’s one-year performance, Marriyum Aurangzeb said CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz has upheld and advanced the values of transparency, merit, and hard work, rooted in the legacy of Mian Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. After years of economic stagnation, Punjab’s revival has begun in earnest.

KP govt launches smart road monitoring with AI

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Sohail Afridi Special Assistant to Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Communication and Works, inaugurated two projects: the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Road Asset Management System (RAMS) Unit and an Artificial Intelligence-based Road Diagnostic Software.

The inauguration ceremony was held in Peshawar on Tuesday, where both the RAMS Unit office and the advanced AI-powered Road Diagnostic Software were officially launched.

The ceremony was attended by Secretary Communication and Works Muhammad Israr, RAMS Director Engineer Inayat-ur-Rehman, and representatives from the Communication and Works Department and the SEED Program.

This modern software has been developed under the SEED Program for the



Communication and Works Department. It will monitor the condition of roads using artificial intelligence, identifying road damages through video analysis, pavement and bridge assessments, and will provide automated calculation of the Pavement Condition Index (PCI). Through this system, data on all roads in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be compiled to accurately assess the condition of the road network and ensure timely maintenance.

The objective of this

project is to create a complete database of road assets, assess the current status of the network, and maintain roads at a high standard. Effective road maintenance is not only crucial for economic development but also plays a key role in providing public access to employment, health, education, and other basic facilities.

Speaking at the ceremony, Muhammad Sohail Afridi praised the efforts of the SEED Program and the Communication and Works

Department team. He stated that this system would prove to be a milestone in the province’s development. He added that this initiative is a major step toward the complete digitalization of the Communication and Works Department.

He further emphasized that an effective road network plays a vital role in the fight against poverty, and this project will bring long-term benefits to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

LGE&RDD to plant 20,000 trees under KPCIP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As part of its sustainable urban development efforts, the Local Government, Elections, and Rural Development Department (LGE&RDD) under its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement initiative is planting over 20,000 trees in five divisional cities of the province.

Additionally, the department is working to save thousands of pine trees on Shimla Hill in Abbottabad by constructing a gender-inclusive park. The department has completed the plantation of 6056 plants.

The plantation is being carried out in five divisional cities, including Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, Abbottabad, and Mingora. Under KPCIP, the department will plant 20,000 plants of different native species across its green spaces component.

As part of this green drive, the department is not only focusing on plantation but also on the preserva-

tion of existing biodiversity. A key example is the Sherwan Hill Family Park, currently under construction on the scenic Shimla Pahari in Abbottabad will help thousands of pine trees to maintain the ecological integrity of the site. These pine species are naturally suited to the local climate and play a critical role in stabilizing soil, retaining moisture, and improving air quality.

The progress so far underscores the department’s commitment to environmental stewardship. So far, in Kohat, a total of 3,418 plants have already been planted, 751 trees in Peshawar, 550 in Abbottabad, while 1337 new plants have been added to its urban landscape in Mingora city. In total, 6056 plants have been planted in various gender-inclusive parks, spaces designed to be safe, accessible, and welcoming for women and children.

“These plantations are more than symbolic gestures as they are tangible steps to restore urban ecosystems,

mitigate the impacts of climate change, and improve the overall quality of life for residents,” said Project Director KPCIP Yasir Ali Khan.

He said that native species were being prioritized to ensure long-term survival and minimal ecological disruption. “This integrated approach is a step towards improving climate resilience,” he said, adding that by combining infrastructure development with environmental sustainability, KPCIP was setting a precedent for green, inclusive, and climate-aware urban transformation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The project director said that with the urban population growing and green spaces shrinking, such initiatives were critical.

“Trees planted today will become the living lungs of tomorrow’s cities to absorb the rising carbon, cool urban heating, and offer a refuge not only to humans but birds and insects,” he said.

Power generation from Dasu project expected in 2027

LAHORE (APP): Power generation from 4,320MW Dasu Hydropower Project is expected to commence in 2027. It was informed to Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Naveed Asghar Chaudhry during his visit to the project site.

The chairman also reviewed construction work on key sites of the project, including the main dam, powerhouse, transformer cavern and the relocated section of the Karakoram Highway (KKH-1).

The GM/PP Dasu Hydropower Project and representatives of the Consultants and the

Contractors were also present, according to WAPDA spokesman here Tuesday.

The Chairman also presided over a progress review meeting at the project office. The project management team briefed him about the targets and the achievements on the project. He was briefed that construction work is currently underway on 20 different sites and is progressing at a steady yet satisfactory pace.

Referring to the targets achieved so far and the milestones to be achieved in the days to come, it was briefed that the excavation works on both the right and left abutments of the main dam have

been completed. The extended right bypass tunnel and the right-side open channel have also been completed and are ready to divert excess river flow during the high-flow season. Excavation of the main dam foundation is continuing and is scheduled for completion by October this year. Placement of Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) in the main dam is expected to begin in March 2026.

The excavation of the underground powerhouse is expected to be completed by February 2026, while the 25-kilometer-long relocated KKH-1-comprising seven tunnels and three

bridges - is scheduled for completion by March 2026. Power generation from the project is expected to commence in 2027.

Highlighting the strategic importance of Dasu Hydropower Project for Pakistan’s energy needs and economic stability, the Chairman urged the Consultants and the Contractors to excel their efforts to meet the project timelines. Emphasizing upon the significance of maintaining the highest construction standards, the Chairman directed the Contractors to adhere to the stipulated quality standards for completion of the project.

Attention: Locker Holders (Defaulters)

All locker holders of MCB Bank Limited, Mardan Region, who have been previously issued reminders regarding overdue locker rent payments and have not cleared their dues despite the lapse of the notice period, are hereby informed through this public notice to settle their outstanding dues within **thirty (30) days** from the date of this publication.

This notice also applies to those defaulters who may not have received prior communication due to change of address or other reasons. Failure to comply within the given timeframe will result in the **forcible opening of lockers in accordance with applicable laws**, in the presence of an authorized committee. Any contents recovered will be securely held by **MCB Bank Limited**, and the Bank reserves the right to recover all outstanding amounts through legal proceedings.

Locker Holder Name	Locker Number	Branch Name	Branch Code
Yasir Ali	15	The Mall Mardan	0279
Habiba Ali	27	The Mall Mardan	0279
M. Tariq	100316	The Mall Mardan	0279
Hidayat Ullah Khan	20	The Mall Mardan	0279
Ubaid Ullah Jan	100320	The Mall Mardan	0279
Ghazala Irshad	100332	The Mall Mardan	0279
Syed Abdul Ali Shah	100365	The Mall Mardan	0279
Waseef-ur-rehman	100314	The Mall Mardan	0279
Ghafari Ali	38	The Mall Mardan	0279
Bashir Zada	10	The Mall Mardan	0279
Khan Zada	100337	The Mall Mardan	0279
Nazir Muhammad	100357	The Mall Mardan	0279
Jamil Hussain Raza	100354	The Mall Mardan	0279
Jamal Shah	100327	The Mall Mardan	0279
Adnan Khan	100335	The Mall Mardan	0279
Pir Syed Jamhoor Shah	100364	The Mall Mardan	0279

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Federal Minister addresses High Court Bar

Muqam pays tribute to lawyers; presents Rs10m cheque on behalf of govt

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam, addressed the Peshawar High Court Bar Association, calling it his identity and home.

During his speech, the Federal Minister presented a cheque of one crore rupees to the Peshawar High Court Bar on behalf of the federal government. The check was handed over to Bar President Ameen-ur-Rehman Advocate. On this occasion, the Bar's General Secretary Ashfaq Dawoodzai, other cabinet members, and lawyers were also present.

Engineer Amir Muqam assured that he would consider the lawyers' demands sympathetically and conveyed greetings to the Bar on behalf of Law Minister

Azam Nazeer Tarar. He praised the role of lawyers in democracy, rule of law, and the provision of justice, and referred to the judicial legacy of the Peshawar High Court as a "highway of justice."

In his address, the Federal Minister said that the desire of Leader Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is to provide relief to lawyers. He termed the 26th Constitutional Amendment a positive step and said that the integrity of Pakistan remains the top priority of the government.

He credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's timely strategy for delivering a firm response to Indian aggression and enhancing the dignity of the green passport. Referring to recent tensions along the Line of Control (LoC), he men-

tioned holding a public rally in Neelum Valley despite the threat of Indian aggression, to demonstrate that the Pakistani nation is dignified and resilient.

Engineer Amir Muqam described the issues of Palestine and Kashmir as humanitarian crises, strongly condemned Israeli aggression, and welcomed the potential ceasefire in Iran. He praised the spirit of solidarity between the Pakistan Army and the people in Azad Kashmir.

While discussing the current government's economic policies, he highlighted signs of economic improvement, including reduced inflation, stabilization of the rupee, and a decrease in interest rates. Despite the IMF agreement, he said the government is striving to provide relief to the public.

Speaking on the issues

following the FATA merger, he emphasized that the sacrifices of FATA residents cannot be ignored. A high-level committee has been established to revive the Jirga system, with consultation from senior lawyers.

He stressed that he represents the people, not any single political party, and that the provincial government must pay attention to public concerns.

He criticized the performance of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and revealed that he had endured seven suicide attacks but always stood by the truth.

In conclusion, he stated that his office is always open for lawyers and promised never to disappoint them. He appealed to the public, lawyers, and all institutions to unite for the development and stability of Pakistan.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam giving away a cheque of Rs10million to members of PHCBA.

IG Police visits police training college Hangu Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The Police Training College (PTC) Hangu has played a historic and vital role in professional policing, not just in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but across Pakistan. This was stated by the Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed, during a visit to PTC Hangu, where he awarded certificates to participants of the 18th Advanced Course.

Speaking at the ceremony, IG Police commended the long-standing contributions of the college since the inception of Pakistan, stating that its services will be remembered in golden words. He also announced that efforts are underway to upgrade PTC Hangu into a full-fledged Police Academy, recognizing its expanding role in law enforcement training.

During his visit, the IG inspected various departments of the college and awarded commendation certificates and cash prizes to faculty members for their exemplary performance. He also attended the final match of the tug-of-war competition held at the college's sports week and presented trophies and prizes to the winning team.

Commandant PTC Hangu Dr. Fasihuddin Ashraf briefed the IG on the ongoing training programs, developmental activities, and challenges faced by the institution. The IG lauded Dr. Fasihuddin's decades-long contribution to police education and training and praised his dedication as an internationally recognized scholar and researcher who has devoted his life to the betterment of police training in Pakistan.

The visit marks a significant step towards institutional strengthening and modernization of police training infrastructure in the province.

Monsoon rains expected F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has issued a comprehensive alert to all Deputy Commissioners across the province, urging preparedness for a fresh spell of monsoon rains forecasted to lash the region from June 25 to July 1, 2025.

Kundi emphasizes gemstone potential

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said that the province is blessed with both natural wealth in the form of precious stones and human talent, emphasizing that modern technology and youth empowerment can play a vital role in ensuring economic prosperity.

He expressed these views while addressing a certificate distribution ceremony for students who completed a training course at the Gem and Geological Institute of Pakistan.

The event was also addressed by Nauman Bashir, Director of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), and Shakil Waheedullah, member of the Board of Governors and a well-known exporter.

Governor Kundi urged the federal government and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) to focus more on the gemstone and minerals sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Referring to the recent Mines and Minerals Conference held in Pakistan, he stressed that this province deserves greater attention. "The

institute is currently operating from a rented building, which must be replaced with a permanent facility," he said, also criticizing the existing ban on gemstone exports as unjust to the province.

"How can we achieve prosperity if exports are blocked?" he questioned, adding that he is in contact with the Prime Minister's Office on the issue.

The Governor said that if Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were provided even 50 percent of the necessary facilities in the minerals sector, the results would be astonishing. He called on the federal government not to neglect the province's gemstone and geological sectors, underlining the importance of law and order and proper resources for success.

He lauded the institute's efforts, saying it is delivering exemplary work despite limited resources, and assured full support in resolving its issues.

He also pledged to speak with the Chairperson of NAVTTC National Vocational and Technical Training Commission for additional support.

Congratulating the graduating students, the Governor said their potential to contribute meaning-

fully to the province's economic growth.

Earlier, TDAP Director Nauman Bashir welcomed the Governor to the institute, remarking that this was the first time in 25 years that a sitting governor had visited, a move expected to further strengthen the institute's performance. General Manager Naveed Masood briefed the Governor, saying that over 5,000 students had graduated from the institute and are now working in gemstone cutting, trading, and exports.

He said the institute aims to use modern technology to prevent the wastage of precious stones and transform them into attractive and useful products for both local and international markets.

The institute, he added, is playing a dual role providing employment and preserving cultural heritage linked to gemstones.

Shakil Waheedullah praised Governor Kundi's commitment and visit, calling it a sign of his genuine dedication to the province.

The Governor was also given a tour of various departments of the institute and personally handed certificates to the graduating students.

Ehsaas Naujawan Program focuses capacity building of youth entrepreneurs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The commencement of a powerful two-day capacity-building training at the Business Incubation Center (BIC), University of Peshawar, under the theme "Empowering Youth Entrepreneurs: Capacity Building under the Ehsaas Naujawan Program." This initiative, jointly organized by the Directorate of Youth Affairs, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Bank of Khyber, aims to equip selected young participants with the critical skills and entrepreneurial mindset necessary to launch and sustain impactful ventures.

Day 1: Foundational

Entrepreneurial Skills

The training opened with great energy and enthusiasm, setting the tone for a transformative journey for aspiring youth entrepreneurs.

The day's first session, Module 1: Introduction to Entrepreneurship & Mindset Building, was delivered by Dr. Malik Shakeel Khan, an esteemed academic and thought leader in entrepreneurship. Dr. Shakeel laid the groundwork for understanding the entrepreneurial journey, focusing on cultivating a resilient, growth-oriented mindset, essential for navigating the challenges of business creation in today's dynamic world.

Module 2: Business

Model Development (BMC) was led by Karishma Zakaullah, Program Manager at Code for Pakistan and Founder of UNidesk. Through an interactive session on the Business Model Canvas, participants actively engaged in defining their value propositions, customer segments, and key resources. The session was both educational and practical, providing young entrepreneurs with tools to design sustainable business models.

A highlight of the day was a special segment featuring Dr. Nauman Mujahid, Director of Youth Affairs KP, and Mr. Zubair Khattak, Deputy Director, who shared powerful insights into the

vision and impact of the Ehsaas Naujawan Program. Their remarks inspired the audience and reaffirmed the government's commitment to youth empowerment and economic development through inclusive entrepreneurship.

The final session of the day, Module 3: Marketing Strategy & Branding, was conducted by Dr. Hashim Khan, a marketing specialist with a passion for youth-led innovation. Through a hands-on brand identity exercise, one volunteer participant's business idea was taken as a case study, enabling everyone to witness the strategic process of building a compelling brand from scratch.

Sustainable peace possible only through collective efforts: CS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, has said that sustainable and lasting peace in any region is only possible through the sincerity, hard work, and mutual cooperation of its people. Speaking at a Grand Divisional Peace Jirga held at Kohat Police Club on Tuesday, he emphasized the importance of inclusive dialogue and trust-building among all stakeholders to ensure enduring peace.

The jirga was convened in preparation for the upcoming month of Muharram to promote harmony and tolerance. It was attended by Provincial Law Minister Iftikhar Alam Advocate, Members of the National Assembly Shehryar Afridi, Hameed Hussain, and Yousaf Khan, Members of the Provincial Assembly Shafi Jan, Aurangzeb Orakzai, and Ali Hadi, Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed, Commissioner

Kohat Division Syed Mutasim Billah Shah, DIG Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, former Chief Justice Syed Ibn Ali, and prominent scholars and elders from both Sunni and Shia communities.

Also present at the event were GOC 9 Division Kohat Major General Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti, Deputy Commissioners and District Police Officers of Kohat, Kurram, Orakzai, and Hangu, along with religious leaders and community elders.

The Chief Secretary noted with appreciation that elected representatives and community leaders were united in their message of solidarity, adding that such sentiments of patriotism must also be instilled in the youth. "We must remind our younger generation that we are all Muslims and brothers; there is no room for division among us," he said.

Highlighting the regional and global situation, Shahab Ali Shah warned of external threats aimed at destabilizing the country from within.

"Our enemy cannot defeat us militarily, but it continues its efforts to weaken us internally," he said, pointing specifically to the involvement of the Indian intelligence agency RAW in fomenting sectarian divisions.

He strongly denounced the use of violence in the name of religion, stating, "When we all share the same faith, there is absolutely no justification for taking up arms against one another."

Regarding the situation in Kurram district, the Chief Secretary shared that peace is gradually being restored and expressed hope that the

main highway would soon be reopened for public traffic. He urged locals to expedite the voluntary surrender of illegal arms, warning that failure to do so would result in confiscation by the state.

Expressing optimism for the upcoming holy month, Shahab Ali Shah said he hoped that, as in the past, both Sunni and Shia communities would observe Muharram with mutual respect and brotherhood. "God willing, not only Muharram but every coming month will pass peacefully, and our enemies will never succeed in their malicious designs," he concluded.



Ceasefire: A Pause or a strategic reset by India?

Dr Air Commodore (retd)
Naveed Khaliq Ansaree

THE May 2025 failed Indian military intimidation of Pakistan that lasted four days, ended in a US-brokered and uncomfortable ceasefire at the request of India. In a volatile region like South Asia, the term ceasefire can be construed not just a diplomatic nicety or delicacy; it can be a chess move too. Following the high-tension clash of military forces, which saw the Indian Air Force (IAF) not only face setbacks at all levels of the conflict but also ground in the narrative and dialectic of opposing wills. The hasty de-escalation between India and Pakistan has prompted both respite and incredulity. Was this ceasefire a calculated step toward stability in the region, or is it a strategic-pause that



IAF needed to regroup, recalibrate, and reclaim the honour that it had lost in the skies of South Asia?

The four-day conflict wasn't just a tactical and operational failure, rather it was a dark chapter and symbolic blow to the IAF, a force that had spent almost a decade modernising fleets, integrating Artificial

Intelligence (AI), and projecting itself as a modern air power and net-security-provider in the region. It revealed that hardware and media-highlights do not replace doctrinal-tenets, operational-cohesion and battlefield-precision. The military volley of shock and awe cost India loss of professional pride in the comity of modern air forces. Having lost six of IAF's combat aircraft including three flagship Rafales, theS-400 air defence system, multimillion dollar Israeli drones, and control over the skies, India was unable to withstand the might, discipline and tactical brilliance of PAF's full-spectrum Multi Domain Operations as indoctrinated by the Chief of the Air Staff Pakistan Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu.

The ceasefire may not hold long. Unfortunately, in its attempt to teach Pakistan a les-

son, India ended up introducing an undesired new normal for the application of military instrument, and precariously lowering the threshold of a hot war with Pakistan. A small false-flag, foreign-sponsored or home-grown terrorist incident could act as a trigger point for an all-out war between the two nuclear neighbours. And also, on the pretext of a small terrorist incident, India may get incited to seize the opportunity to reclaim the lost honour.

Against this backdrop, the ceasefire agreement renewed between India and Pakistan in June 2025 is riddled with strategic ambiguity. There were no major peace talks, no back-channel diplomacy, no India's renunciation of unilateral suspension of the Indus Water Treaty that had stood the test of several full-fledged wars and eye-ball to eye-ball military standoffs. For Pakistan, the

rationale for accepting the ceasefire is clearer: genuine desire to promote peace, a fragile economy, and securing good-will in the international community particularly with the key allies like China and the Gulf states. But for India, particularly its military establishment, the motivation to accept discomfiting ceasefire from the position of weakness is more layered. Could this ceasefire be less about the peace and more about time; a recouping space for the IAF to step back, evaluate the lost air battle, fix doctrinal and training fault lines, and silently prepare for the next round with a firmer grip to reclaim the lost pride?

Honour in the military sense isn't only about pride; it includes competence, credibility, and public perception. The IAF, despite being one of the most professionally-skilled air forces in the region, knows the

weight of negative perception. The post-Pulwama embarrassment had set a high bar for the IAF for the operational performance and strategic messaging that led to the trumpeted induction of flagship fighter aircraft "Rafales"; the post-Phalgam debacle delivered confusion adding insult to the professional injury. Since then, intelligence and surveillance suggest that the IAF has been working inaudibly on several areas: enhancing real-time battlefield data links, fixing command chain disruptions, hurried induction of military equipment and refining jointness with other services. There is also talk of reassessing doctrinal flexibility, and extending tactical commanders a greater freedom of decision-making in a dynamic battlespace.

In my opinion, the shadow of the next crisis is still looming large over South Asia. That next

moment of truth may come in the form of another terror attack, a drone incursion, or a Ukrainian style sabotage action. When the moment arrives, the real test will be whether the IAF's current period of silence was indeed a strategic pause or merely a retreat from embarrassment. Ceasefires are rarely about peace in South Asia; they are about repositioning and silence before the storm. The IAF may have lost a battle for narrative-control in May 2025, it hasn't lost the will. IAF may use the time-out to reflect, reform, or re-strategise; proving this ceasefire wasn't a guided-surrender, but the prelude to the restoration and reclamation of the pride lost in the skies of South Asia.

The writer is a Director at the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Lahore. He can be reached at info@casslhr.com



In brief

University of Gujrat meeting

GUJRAT (APP): A special meeting of the University of Gujrat (UoG) was held at Hafiz Hayat Campus under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zahoor ul Haq to review measures aimed at improving the university's national and international ranking. The meeting brought together faculty deans, department heads, and senior administrative officials to discuss strategic academic and research priorities. Addressing the participants, the vice chancellor emphasized the crucial role of faculty in fostering academic excellence, enhancing research output, and guiding students toward competitive scholarship opportunities. He underscored the importance of high-quality teaching, practical training, and impactful publications as essential components for institutional growth. Senior academic Dr Fayyaz Ahmed presented a detailed report on prevailing research trends and comparative analysis.

Proclaimed offender held

LODHRAN (APP): The Crime Control Department (CCD) claimed to have apprehended a most wanted proclaimed offender during an intelligence-based operation. The accused, Muhammad Shaukat, had killed a man, Muharram Baloch in Kundi Phatak area, three years ago over an old enmity. According to a CCD spokesman, the accused was wanted to the City Police Station Lodhran in two serious cases, including murder and attempt to murder.

Dera Police arrest three

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): In a major step against criminal activities, the Band Korai Police of Dera Ismail Khan arrested three suspects and seized a quantity of drugs and illegal firearms during successful operations. According to the police spokesman, The operations were carried out under the supervision of District Police Officer Sajjad Ahmad Sahabzada, as part of the police department's ongoing and indiscriminate crackdown on crime across the district. SP Paharpur Muhammad Irfan Khan and DSP Paharpur Noor Haider Khan led the efforts, in collaboration with SHO Zeeshan Iqbal of Band Korai Police Station. During the operation, police arrested Jan Wali, son of Haji Mardan, a resident of Kach, and recovered 230 grams of crystal meth (ice) from his possession. Another suspect, Imran, son of Sahib Jan resident of Girsal, was taken into custody for possession of a 30-bore pistol along with ammunition. In a separate raid, Muhammad Rizwan, son of Muhammad Ramzan, resident of Girsal, was apprehended with a 12-bore repeater and ammunition. All three suspects were arrested on the spot, and formal cases have been registered against them in accordance with the law. The Dera Ismail Khan Police reiterated their resolve to continue such operations without discrimination, ensuring safety and rule of law in the region.

Congo fever awareness

SARGODHA (APP): The livestock department is continuing a public awareness campaign to avoid Congo fever as per advisory issued by the Punjab government. "The guidelines about safety measures are being conveyed to farmers, butchers and people through radio programmes and newspapers on daily basis," said Additional Director Livestock Tanveer klyar while talking to APP.

Pakistan came into being to remain forever: Aftab

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Advocate has said that Pakistan came into existence in the name of La Ilaha Illallah and Insha Allah this country will remain forever. The enemy is using the biggest weapon to destroy this country by creating division between us in the name of Sunni and Shia, but Insha Allah we will not allow this conspiracy of the enemy to succeed under any circumstances with mutual agreement and unity.

He expressed these views while addressing the Grand Divisional Aman Jirga held at Kohat Police Club on Tuesday in connection with the peaceful holding of Muharram-ul-Haram.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah, members of the National Assembly, Shahryar Afridi, Hameed Hussain and Yousuf Khan,

members of the Provincial Assembly Shafi Jan, Aurangzeb Orakzai and Ali Hadi, IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed, Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah, DIG Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, former Chief Justice Syed Ibne Ali and Sunni and Shia Ulema and elders also addressed the jirga and assured their full cooperation and role for the peaceful conduct of Muharram-ul-Haram.

On this occasion, GOC 9-Div Kohat Major General Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti, Deputy Commissioners and DPOs of Kohat, Kurram, Orakzai and Hangu districts, and Sunni and Shia Ulema and elders of these districts were also present.

The Law Minister said that it is necessary to be wary of the enemy in this era of social media and our youth should not fall under its negative propaganda. He said, if we remain united and play our due role properly, there is no reason

why these handful of mischievous elements can succeed in their nefarious objectives. He added that peace is a basic need for the development and prosperity of any region. He said that Allah Almighty has blessed this region with minerals like oil and gas and there is also the capacity to build hydropower here, the only need is peace and if there is peace, then InshaAllah, industry will also flourish here and unemployment can be controlled.

Aftab Alam said that this land of Pakistan is in the eyes of the antichrist forces and they are waiting to harm it in one or the other way. He said that by the grace and generosity of Allah Almighty, the country's defense is in the strong hands, otherwise today we would have been number one from Iran. He said that it is the high time to stand against the oppressor and adopt the philosophy of Hussain (RA) for the bright future of the next generation.

Voter awareness program conducted in D.I.Khan



F.P. Report

D.I.KHAN: A voter awareness program was conducted at Apex Institute of Medical Sciences, Dera Ismail Khan on Tuesday by the District Election Commissioner Office D.I.Khan Abdul Rauf Khan. The objective of the session was to educate students about the value of voting, the concept of democracy, and the important role youth can play in strengthening the democratic system.

The District Election Commissioner informed the students that democracy is a system where people elect their representatives through voting. It gives every citizen the right to participate in decision-making. Each vote is important and makes a difference in shaping the country's future.

Students were also encouraged to understand their responsibility as future voters. They were told that youth are the backbone of a nation, and their

participation in the electoral process can bring real and positive change.

The session included discussion on how to register as a voter, the role of CNIC, and how to check one's name in the voter list. The session was interactive, and students asked questions related to voting and elections.

Approximately 100 students attended the program. The students showed keen interest and expressed willingness to register and vote in future elections.

Bugti directs to expand ongoing cleanliness drive

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Tuesday directed that the ongoing cleanliness campaign under the "Safa Quetta Program" should be expanded and be made more effective it for increasing of beautification of the Quetta City.

He said that the campaign against encroachments in the city and its surroundings should be further accelerated and this process should be completed without any pressure, recommendation or concession.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting at the Chief Minister Secretariat to review the performance of the "Safa Quetta Program".

Comprehensive measures were decided for the beautification, cleanliness, drainage and elimination of encroachments of the provincial capital Quetta in the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Development and Planning Hafiz Abdul Basit, Principal Secretary Babar Khan, Secretary Finance Imran Zarkoon, Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqat, Head of Public Private Partnership Authority Dr. Faisal Khan, senior officials of Metropolitan Corporation and related departments.

It was decided in the meeting that an effective

operation against encroachments would be launched across the city.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister also approved the appointment of magistrates to ensure strict implementation of municipal laws.

Briefing the meeting, Commissioner Quetta Hamza Shafqat said that all government lands, properties and properties under the control of encroachment mafias, the identification of the encroachments has been completed, and action has been initiated against them.

The Chief Minister ordered that the ongoing cleanliness campaign under the "Safa Quetta Program" would be expanded and be made more effective.



KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah chairing a high-level meeting on the need, importance and usefulness of the use of helmets and seat belts.

Tragic road accident claims lives of tourist couple

KAGHAN (APP): At least two persons on Tuesday lost their lives while a minor survived miraculously in a heart-rending accident in the picturesque Kaghan Valley as a tourist family from Attock met with a tragic accident fate when their vehicle skidded off the road and plunged hundreds of feet into a deep ravine.

According to the police sources, the husband and wife died on the spot, while their young child miraculously survived the horrific crash, albeit with injuries. The injured child was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital by rescue teams.

The eyewitnesses and rescue officials told to the media that the vehicle lost control while navigating a sharp curve on a mountainous road near the Kaghan area. Rescue 1122, along with local volunteers, conducted a challenging operation to retrieve the bodies from the fast-flowing stream below. The scene was deeply distressing, leaving locals and tourists shaken and tearful.

This tragic incident is the latest in a series of road accidents that have marred the current tourism season in Kaghan and Naran valleys. Earlier this year, a similar mishap occurred near Batakundi when a van carrying tourists from Karachi veered off the road and tumbled into a gorge, resulting in the death of three people, including a child.

Another recent accident near Jalkhad saw a car overturned due to overspeeding on a wet, slippery road, causing multiple injuries.

Despite the local administration implementing safety measures including increased patrolling, installation of warning signs, and public awareness campaigns the number of accidents continues to rise.

The Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) and district administration have reiterated their appeal to visitors to exercise extreme caution, especially while navigating steep slopes and blind turns. They have also called for stricter enforcement of road safety protocols and possibly restricting access to certain high-risk routes during inclement weather.

As the tourism season reaches its peak, this latest tragedy serves as a grim reminder of the unpredictable dangers posed by mountain travel and the pressing need for responsible tourism practices.

Shutter down announced by traders in Malakand

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Traders' organizations, political parties, and civil society in Malakand Division have united in strong opposition to the federal government's proposal to impose a 10 percent sales tax in the region, which has long held tax-exempt status. In protest, a complete shutter-down strike has been announced for Wednesday (today), across all districts of the division.

Addressing a press conference at Timergara Press Club on Tuesday, leaders of the traders' community including Anjuman-e-Tajir Anjuman-e-Tajir Timergara President Haji Anwaruddin, General Secretary Laiq Zada, Zaib City Center President Syed Zahir Shah, and Mobile Union President Syed Nasir Shah, along with others, declared that

markets across Lower Dir, Swat, Buner, Upper Dir, Chitral, Bajaur, Shangla, and Malakand would remain fully closed on Wednesday (today).

The trader leaders rejected the proposed taxation, warning that if the federal government does not reverse its decision, a wheel-jam strike will be the next step. They termed the move unconstitutional, recalling that Malakand Division was officially declared a tax-free zone. They alleged that the imposition of taxes would damage local industries and benefit industrialists from other provinces.

The Mobile Phone Dealers Association also voiced concern, urging the government to refrain from imposing any taxes in Malakand. They said such decisions would severely impact small businesses already struggling due to inflation and slow economic activity.

Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North) chief Inayatullah Khan, in a statement issued here on Tuesday, condemned both the federal and provincial budgets, saying they had made life unbearable for the masses. He said excessive taxation and inflation had broken the back of the poor. He especially criticized the newly introduced tax on solar energy, calling it an anti-people measure and vowed that JI would launch a strong public movement against it.

Inayatullah declared that his party would not accept the imposition of any form of tax in Malakand Division. "Jamaat-e-Islami, alongside the people, will resist this unjust decision and demand its immediate withdrawal," he stated.

Officials of ECP organize voter awareness session



F.P. Report

TANK: A voter awareness program was conducted with students held at Govt. Shaheed Sher Nawaz Centennial Model High School No. 1 by the officials of the District Election Commissioner (DEC), Tank.

The session aimed to

educate students about the value of voting, democracy, and the crucial role youth play in strengthening the democratic system. Key highlights included: Understanding the electoral process in Pakistan; Importance of voting in decision-making; registering as voters and ver-

ifying voter lists and the impact of youth participation in shaping the country's future.

The interactive session encouraged students to take ownership of their responsibilities as future voters, emphasizing that every vote matters and can bring positive change.

Tech Vision Final Year Project Expo Minister visits UET Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi has said that the provincial government is utilizing all available resources to promote higher education, especially in engineering and technology.

Speaking at the "Tech Vision Final Year Project Expo" held at the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Mardan here on Tuesday Mr. Meena Khan Afridi claimed that the provincial government of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf had significantly increased the higher education budget from Rs1.9 billion during the caretaker setup to Rs10 billion in the recently announced provincial budget.

He emphasized the need for universities to move beyond traditional engineering and focus on

emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Cybersecurity, which align with modern global demands and as per the vision of Imran Khan's leadership.

On the occasion, the expo showcased 66 projects by final-year students and featured participation from 30 industries.

Afridi visited all stalls, interacting with students and learning about their innovations. The Best Project Award was secured by the Civil Engineering Department.

In a significant development, Afridi also inaugurated the newly established Center for Artificial Intelligence and a 200-kilowatt solar power system installed by the university.

He termed the AI Center a milestone in Pakistan's technological advancement.

Minister Afridi praised the efforts of UET Mardan's students and

faculty, expressing his admiration for the creativity and potential displayed in the projects. He highlighted the importance of industry-academia linkages for job creation and innovation-driven public services.

Afridi also distributed a Rs.30,000 cash prize to each student project presented at the expo and Rs20,000 cash awards for the best ideas.

Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Gul Muhammad urged engineering students to pursue entrepreneurship instead of merely seeking jobs, stating that they should contribute to the country by creating employment opportunities for others.

The Vice Chancellor Dr. Gul Muhammad presented commemorative shields to Minister Meena Khan Afridi and Director General of Science and Technology Sajid Khan during the closing ceremony.



CHITRAL: Female visitors taking interest in on display items at Heritage Museum Lasapur.



Pro-Palestinian protest leader details 104 days spent in US custody

NEW YORK (AFP): Mahmoud Khalil, one of the most prominent leaders of pro-Palestinian protests on US campuses, recounted his experience surviving 104 days in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention after being targeted for deportation by the Trump administration.

"I shared a dorm with over 70 men, absolutely no privacy, lights on all the time," the 30-year-old said on the steps of Columbia University, where he was a graduate student. Khalil, a legal permanent resident in the United States who is married to an American citizen and has a US-born son, had been in custody since March facing potential removal proceedings.

He was freed from a federal immigration detention

center in Jena, Louisiana, hours after a judge ordered his release on bail. The activist was a figurehead of student protests at Columbia University against US ally Israel's war in Gaza, and the administration of Donald Trump labeled him a national security threat. "It's so normal in detention to see men cry," Khalil recalled, deeming the situation "horrendous" and "a stain on the US Constitution." "I spent my days listening to one tragic story after another: listening to a father of four whose wife is battling cancer, and he's in detention," Khalil detailed in his first protest appearance since regaining his freedom. "I listened to a story of an individual who has been in the United States for over 20 years, all his children

are American, yet he's deported."

The circumstances of the detention were tough, Khalil described, and he took solace where he could find it to gain the strength to carry on. "It is often hard to find patience in ICE detention," Khalil said. "The center is crowded with hundreds of people who are told that their existence is illegal, and not one of us knows when we can go free. "At those moments, it was remembering a specific chant that gave me strength : 'I believe that we will win,'" he continued, to cheers from the audience. Khalil said he even scratched the phrase into his detention center bunk bed as a reminder, being the last thing he saw when he went to sleep and the first thing

he read waking up in the morning.

He repeats it even now, "knowing that I have won in a small way by being free today." Khalil took specific aim at the site of his speech, Columbia University, chastising the institution for saying "that they want to protect their international students, while over 100 (days) later, I haven't received a single call from this university." Khalil's wife Noor Abdalla, who gave birth to their son while her husband was held by ICE, said his "voice is stronger now than it has ever been." "One day our son will know that his father did not bow to fear. He will know that his father stood up when it was hardest, and that the world stood with him," Abdalla said.



LONDON, ENGLAND: Former Mayor of New York, Michael R. Bloomberg speaks during the "Leading with Impact" event, as part of London Climate Action Week at Bloomberg London on Tuesday in London, England.

Syria announces arrests over Damascus church attack

DAMASCUS (AFP): Syrian authorities announced arrests over a suicide blast targeting a church blamed on the Islamic State group, as President Ahmed al-Sharaa vowed those involved in the "heinous" attack would face justice.

The shooting and suicide bombing at the Saint Elias church in the working-class Dwelaa district of the Syrian capital killed 25 people and wounded 63, the health ministry said. The Islamist authorities who took power after ousting longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December said the attacker was affiliated with the Islamic State group, which has not yet claimed the attack.

The interior ministry reported the arrest of "a number of criminals involved in the attack" and the seizure of explosive devices and a booby-trapped motorcycle during a security operation near Damascus "against cells affiliated with the Daesh (IS) terrorist group". The announcement came hours after Sharaa vowed authorities would "work night and day, mobilising all our specialised security agencies, to capture all those

who participated in and planned this heinous crime and bring them to justice". The attack follows incidents of sectarian violence in recent months, with security one of the greatest challenges for the new authorities.

The attack "reminds us of the importance of solidarity, and unity of the government and the people in facing all that threatens our nation's security and stability", Sharaa said. The attack was the first suicide bombing in a church in Syria since the country's civil war erupted in 2011, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor. It was also the first attack of its kind in the Syrian capital since Assad's ouster.

During a visit to the stricken church, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch John X said a funeral service for some of the victims would be held on Tuesday. He told clergy and other faithful that "what happened is painful, but do not be afraid". AFP correspondents saw shops closed in Dwelaa while people posted death notices onto walls. Since the new authorities took power, the international

community has repeatedly urged them to protect minorities and ensure their participation in Syria's transition, particularly after the recent violence.

The top cleric of Syria's Sunni Muslim majority, Grand Mufti Osama al-Rifai, condemned acts of violence and terrorism in a statement. "We express our complete rejection of targeting places of worship and terrorising believers," he said. Foreign condemnation of the attack has continued to pour in. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey would not allow extremists to drag Syria back into chaos and instability, vowing that Ankara would "continue to support the Syrian government's fight against terrorism". Turkey, which is close to the new authorities, has repeatedly offered its operational and military support to fight IS and other militant threats.

French President Emmanuel Macron also denounced the "horrible" attack, while the European Union said it "stands in solidarity" with Syria in combating ethnic and religious violence. "It is a grave reminder of the need to intensify efforts against

the terrorist threat and to ensure the enduring defeat of Daesh and other terrorist organisations," EU foreign policy spokesperson Anouar El Anouni said, using another name for IS. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis expressed anger after the attack on the Greek Orthodox Church, calling on the new authorities "to take concrete measures to protect all ethnic and religious minorities". UN resident and humanitarian coordinator for Syria Adam Abdelmoula urged authorities to take "all necessary steps to ensure the protection of civilians", saying there was "no room for violence and extremism".

Syria's Christian community has shrunk from around one million before the war to fewer than 300,000 due to waves of displacement and emigration. IS seized large swathes of Syrian and Iraqi territory in the early years of the civil war, declaring a cross-border "caliphate" in 2014. The jihadists were territorially defeated in Syria 2019 but have maintained a presence, particularly in the country's vast desert.

Starmer and Zelenskiy agree military production project

LONDON (Reuters): Volodymyr Zelenskiy and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a new defence co-production initiative during a short visit by the Ukrainian president to London to discuss his country's defence against Russia.

The two leaders announced the deal in the garden of Starmer's Downing Street residence, where they also met Ukrainian troops being trained in Britain. "I'm really proud that this afternoon, we're able to announce an industrial military co-production agreement - the first of its kind so far as Ukraine and the UK are concerned - which will be a massive step forward now in the contribution that we can continue to make," Starmer said.

Speaking alongside Starmer, Zelenskiy said the deal would help strengthen both nations, as he thanked Britain for its support in the war against Russia. The agreement to share battlefield technology would boost Ukraine's drone production and link up Britain's defence industry with the technology being developed on the front lines in Ukraine, Starmer's office said in a statement. The agreement, which covers the next three years, comes after the two countries set out a 100-year partnership to deepen security and cultural ties when Starmer visited Kyiv in January. In a readout of the meeting between the two leaders, Starmer's office said they agreed that the "coalition of the willing" - a grouping led by Britain and France, and not including the US - should convene virtually in the coming weeks to update members on next steps.

Zelenskiy met King Charles at Windsor Castle where the two shook hands for cameras on what was their third meeting this year and the latest gesture of Charles', and Britain's, support for Ukraine. The Ukrainian leader also met the speakers of both houses of parliament.

Prisoners' families dismayed

TEHRAN (AFP): An Israeli strike on Evvin prison in Tehran was irresponsible and put prisoners "in mortal danger", Noemie Kohler, whose sister Cecile is being held in the jail, told AFP. Iran's judiciary said Israeli strikes left sections of the facility damaged and Israel's defence minister confirmed the army was targeting it. Cecile Kohler has been held along with her partner Jacques Paris in Iran since May 2022 on espionage charges their families reject. Overall, Iran is believed to hold around 20 European nationals in what some Western governments describe as a strategy of hostage-taking aimed at extracting concessions from the West. Most are held in Evvin, a large, heavily fortified complex in the north of Tehran, notorious among activists for rights abuses.

US attacks on Iran risk global conflict, Russia and China warn

MOSCOW, BEIJING (Agencies): Russia and China have strongly condemned US attacks on Iranian nuclear sites, warning they could drag the world into a broader war and set a dangerous international precedent. The reactions came just hours before Iran launched missiles at the US base in Qatar in response to strikes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin described the American strikes as "unjustified" and said they were pushing the world towards a perilous tipping point. Speaking after talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi at the Kremlin, Putin said Moscow would try to help the Iranian people but stopped short of detailing how. "The absolutely unprovoked aggression against Iran has no basis and no justification," Putin told Araghchi. "For our part, we are making efforts to assist the Iranian people." The Chinese government also weighed in, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi condemning both the Israeli strikes on Iran and the US bombardment of its nuclear facilities. He said the rationale of attacking over "possible future threats" sent the wrong signal to the world and urged a return to diplomacy.

Wang called for all parties to "immediately resume dialogue and nego-

tiation", warning the escalation risked destabilising the region. Tensions have soared in recent days, with US President Donald Trump and Israeli officials openly discussing the possibility of assassinating Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and pushing for regime change - moves the Kremlin warned could plunge the region into a full-blown war. During the high-level Kremlin meeting, Araghchi reportedly handed Putin a message from Khamenei, though the contents were not disclosed. A senior Iranian source told the Reuters news agency the letter called for increased Russian support, but Moscow has not confirmed receiving any such appeal.

Later, while addressing a gathering of elite military recruits, Putin spoke more broadly about growing instability. "Extra-regional powers are also being drawn into the conflict," he said. "All this brings the world to a very dangerous line." Despite signing a 20-year strategic pact with Iran earlier this year, Russia has avoided making concrete military commitments to defend Tehran, and the agreement lacks any mutual defence clause. Iranian officials, speaking anonymously to Reuters, expressed frustration with Moscow's perceived inaction. They said Tehran felt let down by both Russia

and China, despite repeated calls for support.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov declined to say whether Iran had asked for weapons or military aid but insisted Moscow's ties with Tehran remained strong. "Our strategic partnership with Iran is unbreakable," Ryabkov said, adding that Iran had every right to defend itself. Still, the Kremlin appears wary of any move that might provoke a direct confrontation with Washington, particularly as Trump seeks to ease tensions with Moscow amid the war in Ukraine. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said US-Iran developments would not affect the Russia-US dialogue, calling them "separate processes". Memories of US-led wars in the Middle East still linger. United Nations Security Council session, Russia's UN envoy Vassily Nebenzia drew comparisons with the 2003 Iraq invasion. He recalled how the US falsely claimed Iraq held weapons of mass destruction. "Again, we're being asked to believe the US's fairytales," Nebenzia said. "This cements our conviction that history has taught our US colleagues nothing." Russia, China and Pakistan have jointly submitted a resolution calling for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in the Middle East.

Son of Iran shah warns against Khamenei 'lifeline'

TEHRAN (AFP): Europe and the United States should not give a lifeline to the Iranian leadership under Ayatollah Ali Khamenei through talks when his rule is "closing every day" to ending, the son of Iran's ousted shah told AFP.

Reza Pahlavi, formerly crown prince and now a key opposition figure, said in an interview in Paris that foreign powers had to seize the chance of what he termed Iran's "Berlin Wall moment" with its leaders weakened by days of Israeli air strikes. "I can hardly imagine that a regime that is now severely diminished in its capabilities and has been practically humiliated is in the mood for more talks," he said.

He said that the Islamic republic, whose top diplomat Abbas Araghchi held talks with European foreign ministers in Switzerland, had "time and time again" been "deceitful" in negotiations. "This regime is collapsing... You can facilitate that by standing this time with them (the Iranian people), not throwing this regime another lifeline to survive," said Pahlavi, 64.

"The end of the regime is near... this is our Berlin Wall moment," the US-based Pahlavi added, referring to the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall that symbolised the downfall of dictatorships in eastern Europe. Israel has carried out 10 days of air strikes against Iran, seeking to degrade its nuclear and ballistics pro-

grammes, but also hitting other targets.

The United States joined in with unprecedented attacks of its own, including on the heavily-fortified Fordo nuclear site. Khamenei's whereabouts are unclear and Israel has refused to rule out killing him. He has led the Islamic republic since the 1989 death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who spearheaded the 1979 Islamic revolution that ousted Pahlavi's late father shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and forced the imperial family to flee Iran. Reza Pahlavi, without giving further details, said he had information that Khamenei was underground in a bunker "and unfortunately using people as a human shield". And he said that he had received "credible reports" that top officials and members of the supreme leader's family were looking at ways to flee Iran.

He also said he had received indications from people in the security forces that they were willing to switch sides and join the opposition. "They are beginning to communicate with us from the military, the intelligence apparatus," he said.

Pahlavi had announced the creation of "formal channel", a secure platform to handle the "growing volume" of requests from military, security, and police personnel he said were "breaking with the regime".

While Pahlavi has long insisted he is not claiming the Iranian throne, he reaffirmed he was ready "to lead this national transition" that would take Iran to a new era after the eventual fall of the Islamic republic. He said its new system would be based on the core principles of territorial integrity, individual liberty and separation of religion and state. "The final form of this future democracy we seek will be for the Iranian people to decide in a national referendum," said Pahlavi, the figurehead of just one of several movements opposed to the Iranian leadership who are notorious for bickering among themselves.

Asked by AFP if he would see himself as a future president or even king of Iran while leading such a process, he said: "I am stepping in to lead this transition. I don't believe I need a title to play that role. The important thing is to be someone who can galvanise a nation." However during his stay in Paris there is no official meeting programmed with French officials. President Emmanuel Macron has warned that to "seek regime change in Iran through military means" would "lead to chaos". But Pahlavi said he was in touch with governments. "Elements in my team have been at various levels in contact with higher level points of contact with different contacts in Europe and America," he told AFP.

With missiles overhead, Tel Aviv residents huddle underground

TEL AVIV (AFP): As night falls in Israel's coastal city of Tel Aviv, hundreds make the familiar descent into the depths of the metro to escape the latest salvo of Iranian missiles. For those with no safe shelters near their homes, the city's underground stations and car parks have become vital refuges since the war began on June 13.

Despite nightly missile barrages, Israel's casualty toll has remained relatively low, with authorities repeatedly stressing the importance of taking cover in life-saving protected spaces.

"The day after the Israeli intervention in Iran began, there was an explosion, a bomb not far from my home, and the entire shelter I was in shock," Muriel Azria, 58, who works in tourism, told AFP in a Tel Aviv metro station. She arrives prepared every

evening with her suitcase and her dog, ready for a night on her council-provided mattress set up on the platform. "From the moment I enter the subway, which is magnificent, I calm down," she said. "It's not very comfortable, but at least I'm not afraid, we hear much less booming."

"There are people, everyone is generally very nice," she told AFP. "All these children here, all this mess, and it's really cold and not so comfortable. But what other choice do we have? Where will we go?" she asked, stifling a sob. More than 60 percent of Israelis do not have a safe shelter at home, according to the NGO Latet, which distributes emergency kits, food parcels and children's games to the most vulnerable families.

"I'm very nervous but I need to be strong for my child," said 48-year-old

Erlenn Solomon, who has slept every night in an underground station since the start of the conflict. "As a mom, you need to be strong," Israel's economic hub Tel Aviv has been particularly targeted by Iran's missiles since the start of the conflict on June 13. The full extent of the damage from Iran's attacks on Israel is not known due to military censorship rules, but at least 50 impacts have been acknowledged nationwide and 24 people have died, according to official figures.

Once a rare sight in a country with highly sophisticated air defences, Israelis have now become somewhat used to waking up to images of blown-out buildings and rubble-strewn streets.

As well as the metro, some have sought shelter from the bombing in the depths of underground car

parks. "It's terrible. I've had some moments where I've told my parents I don't want to do this anymore, I want to go home, back to the apartment where we live close," said Maya Papirany, 27, speaking four storeys below ground. "Then they remind me of the dangers of not being down here," she added. Some sit in plastic chairs while others lie in sleeping bags with their eyes glued to their phones to follow the situation above ground.

Papirany now sleeps alongside her mother and children on a mattress on the floor of a car park lined with tents. Beside her, a young girl sleeps soundly. "They're not scared of the bombs. I think they're too young to really understand what's going on, and they don't really understand the seriousness of it, so they think it's, like, a fun game," she said.

North Korea condemns US strike on Iran as violation of sovereign rights

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea said it strongly condemns the US strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities as a grave violation of a sovereign state's security interests and territorial rights, the North's state media reported.

The United States and Israel are the culprits of the current tensions in the Middle East born out of Jerusalem's "ceaseless war moves and territorial expansion" accepted and encouraged by the West," North Korea's foreign ministry said. "(North Korea) strongly denounces the attack on Iran by the US which ... violently trampled down the

territorial integrity and security interests of a sovereign state," the unnamed spokesperson said in a statement carried by KCNA news agency.

"The just international community should raise the voice of unanimous censure and rejection against the US and Israel's confrontational acts," the statement said. Iran and nuclear-armed North Korea have maintained friendly ties and have been suspected for decades of military cooperation including in developing ballistic missiles. A now-defunct panel of experts monitoring UN sanctions

said in 2021 that the two countries had resumed cooperation on long-range missile development projects, including the transfer of critical parts.

"Pyongyang could provide important assistance in helping Iran reconstitute destroyed missile production facilities, including at new sites to avoid scrutiny, perhaps," said Ankit Panda, of the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Whether either country would be interested in substantively cooperating on any efforts to rebuild or accelerate Iran's nuclear

weapons programme is less certain, given the political and military sensitivities over such technology, he said. "There are certain matters pertaining to weapons design that the North Koreans would not want to proliferate because once in Iran, they could be discovered by the United States and potentially assist the US in undermining its deterrent," Panda said. However, Pyongyang has substantive experience in weaponisation and could be able to assist in the non-fissile components of a nuclear bomb, such as the conventional explosives, he added.

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Resolute efforts needed to restore peace

IF the problems in the Middle East could be solved by unilateral military actions, there would not have been decades of chaos in the region. That the Middle East is always trapped in a vicious circle of violence is inseparable from the United States' obsession with leveraging its military advantages to bring its desired "changes" to the region.

Whether it is the Iran nuclear issue, as is the case now, or the previous Iraq War, the Syrian civil war or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whenever the international community and regional countries have made progress toward resolving the disputes through political means, the US, along with its regional allies and proxies, acts to change the rules of the game in a might-makes-right direction.

For example, there is a strong international consensus that the Iran nuclear issue should be settled by political means, and intensive diplomatic endeavors have been made in that regard — seemingly supported by the US — that appeared to be bearing fruit until the US pounded through them with its "Midnight Hammer".

People have every reason to suspect that using force to maintain long-term chaos in the Middle East is the geostrategic purpose of the US.

A united Middle East, occupying a pivotal position on the world economic and political map thanks to its resources and strategic position, would be another important force promoting multilateralism and a multipolar world, neither of which appeals to the exceptionalist worldview of Washington.

The history of the past few decades has convinced the US that keeping the Middle East in perpetual instability and provoking conflicts between countries, sects and ethnic groups in the region benefits the US' global geostrategic layout.

From this perspective, it is not difficult to understand why the US administration was so determined to carry out its military action on Saturday, ignoring the warnings of the international community.

So it should come as no surprise to hear the US president on Sunday raising the possibility of enforced "regime change" in Iran, even though senior officials in his administration had stated a few hours earlier that this was not something the US was interested in.

The US attacks on Iran seriously violate the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law, as well as Iran's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity. Yet different administrations of the US have made it clear that as far as the US is concerned its interests always come before international laws and rules, even those that it has drawn up itself in its favor.

So the international community's condemnation of the US' lawbreaking attacks on Iran has been like water off a duck's back. Likewise, the US has been impervious to the criticism that its pugnacious impulsive has exacerbated tensions in the Middle East and dealt a heavy blow to the international nuclear nonproliferation regime, as these are not part of its agenda.

The more the US is hell-bent on interrupting the political resolution of the Iran nuclear issue, the more the international community should stand firm and endeavor to realize a political settlement.

As Chinese Ambassador Fu Cong said at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on Sunday, diplomatic means to address the Iran nuclear issue have not been exhausted, and there is still hope for a peaceful solution.

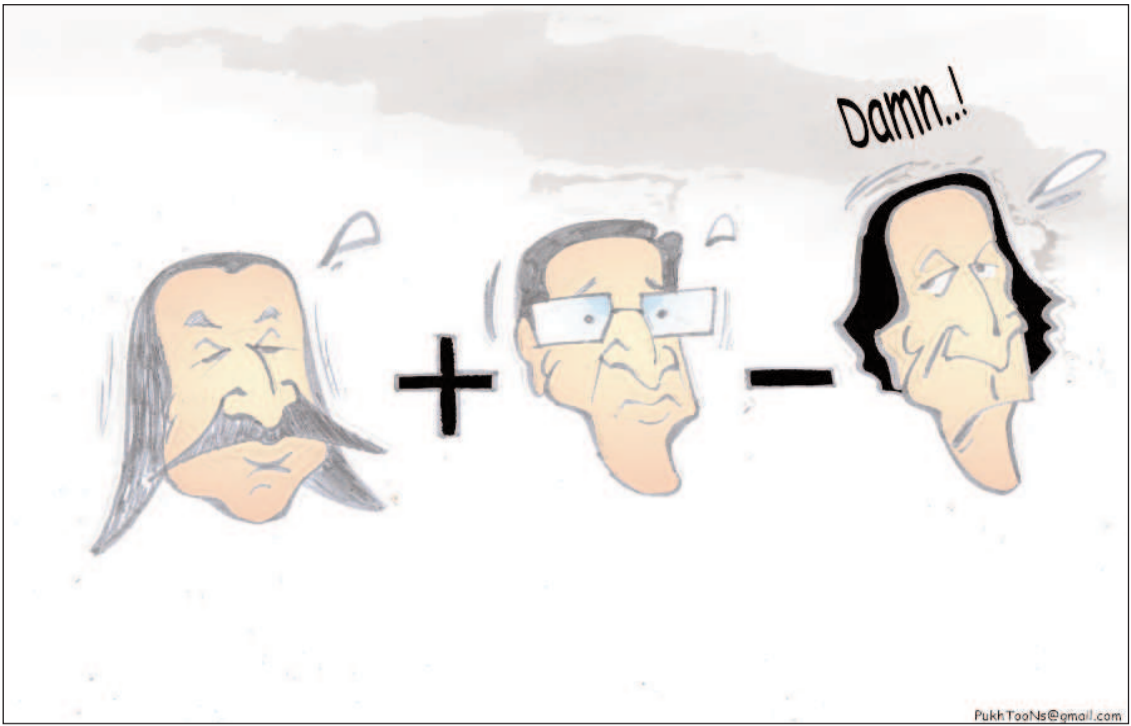
Parties should stay committed to the political settlement of the Iran nuclear issue and work to bring it back onto the track of a political solution through dialogue and negotiation, with a view to reaching an agreement acceptable to all parties.

China has called on parties concerned to abide by international law, curb the impulse to use force, and avoid exacerbating the conflict and adding fuel to the fire.

Parties to the conflict should make every effort to avoid harm to innocent civilians and refrain from attacking civilian facilities. To that end China has called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the hostilities. It stands ready to work with the international community to make unremitting efforts to restore peace and stability in the Middle East.

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Peace through power or power without peace?

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE history of mankind is, in no small measure, a history of conflict and conquest. From the dawn of human existence, when survival depended upon the hunt and protection from rival tribes, the creation and refinement of weaponry has marched in lockstep with the evolution of civilizations. What began as a crude wooden spear-such as those uncovered in Germany and dating back nearly 400,000 years-gradually transformed into instruments of ever greater precision, lethality, and political consequence.

As the tides of history turned and man mastered the elements, so too did his weapons evolve. The Iron Age, commencing around 1200 BCE, introduced the hardened blades and steel-forged tools that defined the military prowess of ancient empires-the Assyrians, with their chariots and swords, and the Celts, known for their formidable metalwork, stand as enduring symbols of that era. With these instruments, wars were waged not only for defence, but for dominion.

Yet it was in the East, in ninth-century China, that the next revolution occurred-gunpowder. First used in ceremonial pyrotechnics, it did not take long for its martial applications to be discovered. By the fourteenth century, the knowledge of gunpowder had reached Europe, ushering in the age of muskets, cannons, and artillery. The battlefield was transformed, as was the notion of distance and destruction. War was no longer the intimate affair of blades and shields-it had become a mechanised, impersonal force.

The culmination of this technological arc came in

the twentieth century, amid the fires of the Second World War. It was then that science, ambition, and fear converged to produce the most devastating weapon yet conceived by man-the atomic bomb. The United States, under the secretive Manhattan Project, succeeded in detonating the world's first nuclear device on July 16, 1945, in the deserts of New Mexico. That experiment, code-named "Trinity," would soon be followed by the infamous bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The cities were obliterated, hundreds of thousands perished, and the world beheld for the first time the terrifying potential of nuclear force.

The war ended, but a new and perilous era began-the Cold War. The Soviet Union, not to be outpaced, conducted its first nuclear test, "RDS-1," on August 29, 1949, in the steppes of Kazakhstan. Thus began the arms race between the two superpowers, each viewing the other not merely as a rival, but as an existential threat. The balance of terror, precarious yet effective, shaped international politics for decades.

Other nations, too, followed suit. The United Kingdom tested its first nuclear weapon in 1952, not in its homeland but on the remote coast of Australia.

France, asserting its independence in the wake of the Suez Crisis, conducted its inaugural test in Algeria in 1960. China, isolated and hemmed in by both the Soviet Union and the United States, demonstrated its capability in 1964 at Lop Nur. Each of these powers justified their actions in the name of security, sovereignty, or strate-

gic parity.

India joined the nuclear club in 1974 with its so-called "peaceful nuclear explosion"-the Smiling Buddha test. However, by 1998, any pretense of peaceful intent was cast aside with a series of underground tests that clearly indicated full weaponization. Pakistan, under intense internal pressure and geopolitical uncertainty, responded swiftly and decisively. On May 28, 1998, in the Chagai hills of Balochistan, Pakistan conducted its own nuclear tests-marking its entrance into the exclusive group of declared nuclear powers.

Pakistan's action was not one of provocation, but of necessity. It was a message of deterrence, not aggression. As the only Islamic country to formally declare and demonstrate nuclear capability, Pakistan did so with solemn responsibility, mindful of the regional balance of power and its own right to self-preservation.

Other nations took divergent paths. North Korea, defiant and isolated, conducted its first test in 2006 and has since used its arsenal as a tool of diplomatic leverage.

Israel, on the other hand, maintains a policy of deliberate ambiguity, refusing to confirm or deny its possession of nuclear weapons, though it is widely accepted that it has been a nuclear power since the late 20th century.

What remains deeply troubling, however, is the inconsistency with which the world responds to nuclear aspirations. No state, once having crossed the nuclear threshold, has been forcibly disarmed. Some have been sanctioned, others diplomatically coaxed, but all have retained their arsenals.

Except, it seems, when it comes to Iran.

Unlike Israel, India, or even North Korea, Iran is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and has repeatedly declared that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful in nature. Yet it has faced years of economic strangulation, cyber-sabotage, diplomatic isolation, and open threats of military action. The Western world, particularly the United States and its allies, has treated Iran's nuclear programme not with the tools of diplomacy and parity, but with suspicion and hostility.

Herein lies the contradiction that undermines the very architecture of international law and equity. Why India's pursuit accepted, and Israel's secrecy respected-yet Iran is singled out for punitive treatment?

This glaring double standard is not only unjust but dangerous. It signals to the world that power, not principle, governs the nuclear order. That alliances, not adherence, determine legitimacy.

In the final analysis, it is not the possession of nuclear weapons that defines responsibility, but the manner in which a state conducts itself. Pakistan has demonstrated restraint, responsibility, and rationality. It has not brandished its nuclear capability for coercion, nor has it used it to threaten regional stability. It seeks only to protect its sovereignty-no more, no less.

History may one day judge not only those who built the bomb, but those who imposed the rules of who may hold it. Until the world applies its standards with fairness, the dream of a just and peaceful international order shall remain, like the mushroom cloud itself, a shadow over the conscience of mankind.

China's development aligns with human future

Gilbert Morris

THE advancement of artificial intelligence and automation will likely curb job growth. How should China address this challenge?

To begin with, China can leverage growing Chinese national pride to boost the consumption of Chinese products, which in turn will promote innovation and high-quality development. Together with non-traditional jobs, such as developing online education, to primarily benefit communities living in China's remote areas but also people across the world, this has the potential to boost the country's technological advancement.

China's political system is characterized by efficient decision-making, which can help better address problems.

Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and India need low-carbon and low-cost standard-of-living solutions, which China has already realized. The total effective demand for housing alone across the world is worth \$1.9 trillion, which, given its productive capacity, trade interests, price points and the Belt and Road Initiative, China can meet. No propaganda can alter this fact. As a matter of fact, China could help reduce the "global carbon footprint" even as it addresses global poverty and

housing demand.

China can cultivate trade in tandem with internationalization and cultural exchanges. Building "enterprise global cities" is an effective way of inviting foreigners to travel and work in China, and a means for absorbing imports of cultural artifacts.

Besides, China's success on the education front should not be allowed to go to waste. The advancement of education, and science and technology can be used to facilitate decades of economic and cultural development.

China's approach to innovation, social system management, enterprise technology and innovation city laboratories could become a curriculum to promote future development. In Africa alone, 9.5 million new classrooms and 9 million new teachers will be required between now and 2050. That's more than \$4 trillion in infrastructure and technological/AI architecture — plus corollary investments in future development.

Given that China does not use the Belt and Road Initiative to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, African nations can develop a vision to improve the continent's future, by removing internal trade bar-

riers while setting prudent deal terms — which Malaysia has shown can be done. Also, China may extend the BRI beyond infrastructure development to ensure deeper and wider positive impacts, and use the "Yiwu international trade city" model of light manufacturing zones to reconstitute trade and development options, which is a \$1 trillion opportunity for the world's youngest people in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and even India.

Moreover, China is underperforming in tourism. In 2024, France recorded more than 100 million person visits — in comparison, China records only about 60 million foreign person visits. In this regard, traditional Chinese hospitality and (non-commercialized) rituals could open more doors of opportunities in tourism, which would align with growing cultural interests among travelers.

The concept of a community with shared future for humankind highlights the needs of people across the world. The vision, diligence and accomplishments advancing China's national rejuvenation are exactly in line with the requirement of the youths in the developing world.

The investments made by the United States and other Western countries in developing countries have been exploitative and extractive. The question is whether countries across the world, long neglected and abused, can examine alignment imperatives now to strike prudent deals with measurable targets and according to their capacities.

Kishore Mahbubani, Singaporean scholar and former diplomat, has said that serious thinkers, diplomats and strategists should see China's development as a great spectacle of human creativity, innovation and mastery. There is a Chinese principle, tianxia, which emerged during the transition from the Shang (c. 1600 BC-c. 1046 BC) to the Zhou (c. 1046 BC-256 BC) dynasty. It is a principle of harmony among all under heaven. Confucius infused this concept with philosophical force — a concept that aligns with a multipolar, rule-based world order based on mutual respect and human dignity. These rubrics are reiterated in President Xi Jinping's speeches on national rejuvenation.

If China pursues this goal, the world will experience its greatest transition to a civilization based on human dignity and mutual respect.

Myanmar's sham election plan is a dangerous ruse

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

THE recent announcement by Myanmar's junta that it will hold national elections in December 2025 or January 2026 is not the sign of democratic progress it purports to be. Rather, it is a familiar ruse, one the military regime has deployed before to buy time, consolidate power, and manipulate both domestic and international opinion. The world must not be fooled again.

Since the February 2021 coup, Myanmar has descended into chaos. The military's seizure of power dismantled a fledgling democracy and sparked widespread resistance, pushing the country into a protracted civil conflict. The state of emergency, imposed as a pretext for the coup, remains in effect, granting sweeping powers to the military and silencing opposition through brutal repression. Thousands have been detained, tortured, or killed. Ethnic minorities, including the Rohingya, continue to face systemic violence and displacement. Meanwhile, the junta has outlawed key opposition parties, including the National League for Democracy, and imprisoned its leaders, such as Aung San Suu Kyi, on trumped-up charges.

In this context, any promise of an election is farcical. An electoral process conducted under martial law, with political opponents silenced and civil liberties suspended, cannot be deemed free or fair. It is an insult to the very idea of democracy.

Yet the junta's announcement is not without strategic calculation. It is timed to preempt growing international isolation and to fend off pressure from ASEAN and other regional actors. The regime wants to give the appearance of progress, hoping that regional powers will ease diplomatic pressure and donor nations will resume engagement. It is a playbook the generals have used before with some success.

In 2010, the junta held elections while maintaining tight control, barring credible opposition, and ensuring a military-dominated outcome. That charade allowed for limited normalization with the international community, culminating in a brief democratic opening that ended with the 2021 coup. The lesson from that period is clear: Myanmar's military will use any perceived legitimacy from international recognition of elections to strengthen its hold on power. ASEAN, under Malaysia's current leadership, has a unique opportunity and responsibility to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. As the region's primary diplomatic bloc, ASEAN's stance will be critical. It must categorically reject any election that does not meet internationally accepted democratic standards. That means first insisting on clear and enforceable preconditions before any vote can be recognized. These include the lifting of the state of emergency, the release of all political prisoners, the restoration of press and civic freedoms, and the reinstatement of banned political parties.

Through neutral, independent actors, not through the junta, which has consistently diverted aid for its own purposes. Finally, the National Unity Government, ethnic minority groups, and civil society actors must be included in any political roadmap. These actors represent the will of the people far more than the generals in Naypyidaw. A sustainable future for Myanmar cannot be built on the exclusion of its most representative and resilient voices.

The stakes are high. A fraudulent election would not only prolong the suffering of Myanmar's people, it could also entrench authoritarianism in a region already grappling with democratic backsliding. ASEAN, which has long prided itself on the principle of noninterference, must recognize that the Myanmar crisis is no longer an internal matter. It threatens regional stability, refugee flows, and the integrity of ASEAN itself.

If ASEAN and the international community lend even tacit legitimacy to a rigged election, they will be complicit in the junta's deception. But if they set and enforce clear conditions for political inclusion and democratic safeguards, they can help steer Myanmar toward a just and peaceful resolution. Now is the time for vigilance, not validation. The world must not fall for the junta's electoral theater. Myanmar's people deserve a real choice, not another chapter of military rule dressed up in the trappings of democracy.

Moreover, ASEAN must ensure that international election observers are involved at every stage, from voter registration to ballot counting. Observation cannot be symbolic or constrained to a few urban centers. It must be comprehensive, credible, and capable of certifying the integrity of the process. Anything less would provide a fig leaf for a military-engineered outcome.

Malaysia, as ASEAN chair, is well-placed to lead on this issue. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has shown a commendable willingness to speak frankly on regional matters of justice and human rights. His administration should work to rally ASEAN consensus around a firm stance on Myanmar's elections. This includes conditioning any engagement with the junta on measurable progress toward a genuine democratic transition.

ASEAN's Five Point Consensus, adopted in 2021, remains the region's guiding framework for resolving the Myanmar crisis. But it has so far failed to yield results, largely because the junta has ignored its provisions with impunity. If ASEAN does not enforce consequences for noncompliance, the consensus becomes meaningless. Refusing to endorse a sham election would be a first step in restoring credibility to the bloc's diplomacy.

The international community must also play its part. Western governments, the UN, and multilateral institutions should issue an unequivocal message: no recognition of any electoral result without a demonstrably fair process. Targeted sanctions should remain in place until democratic norms are restored. More importantly, humanitarian aid to Myanmar must be expanded, but channeled through neutral, independent actors, not through the junta, which has consistently diverted aid for its own purposes.

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Trump claims a forever peace in the land of forever war — but it could be fleeting

SO much for the squamire. Donald Trump seems to have emerged from the worst crisis in America's estrangement with Iran's Islamic Republic with a win.

The president leaped on Tehran's modest missile response Monday to the US pounding of its nuclear sites as a sign it wants to end escalations. "CONGRATULATIONS WORLD, ITS TIME FOR PEACE!" he posted on Truth Social.

Trump's exuberance was a sign that he sees the US involvement in the conflict as over, at least for now.

And he followed up by announcing a ceasefire between Iran and Israel that he early on Tuesday said was "in effect." Ceasefires in the Middle East are often fragile and fleeting, as was underscored by attacks by both Israel and Iran in the hours before the truce was due to be established.

But the president was already trumpeting his chosen image as a peace-maker and consummate deal maker, only 48 hours after US stealth bombers slammed Iran.

"I think the ceasefire is unlimited. It's going to go forever," Trump told NBC News on Monday night, predicting that Israel and Iran will never "be shooting at each other again."

That's a bold claim given the Middle East's reputation as a graveyard of American presidencies. And for all Trump's marketing skills, events will decide whether his breakthrough is for real or just another illusion.

Israel accused Iran of breaking the ceasefire just hours after it was set to take effect, vowing to respond "with force." Tehran, meanwhile, denied violating the truce.

And has the United States, as Trump claimed, really ensured the "obliteration" of Iran's nuclear program, an existential threat to Israel? Or is it all a classic Trump mirage, and does the glaring unfinished business of this conflict — an apparently missing stockpile of highly enriched uranium that can be quickly made into a bomb — mean a deeper crisis looms?

A quick end to the fighting would shape Trump's presidency and legacy and boost a foreign policy previously marked by failures like the stalled peace effort in Ukraine. But will the world change its mind about the master of chaos if he really does help ease tensions in a blood-soaked region?

What is next for Israel? Does Trump trust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to halt his attacks on Iran? And will Israel finally take steps to relieve the agony of Palestinian civilians, starving and dying by the thousands in the onslaught in Gaza?

And in Tehran, will the humiliation of Iran's

clerical regime and the splintering of its Middle East network of fear promote a political spring that many of its citizens crave?

The president can claim the most significant foreign policy and military success of his time in the Oval Office. Trump made a bet that many skeptics saw as irresponsible — that he could hammer Iran's nuclear plants without plunging the US into a new Middle East quagmire to mirror Iraq.

So far, he's been proved right. While Trump might have initially been uneasy about Israel's assault on Iran, which seemed calculated to draw him in, he asserted control and exploited an opening to severely degrade Iran's nuclear program with little cost to the US. After days of public teases, his approach looked like a

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Stephen Collinson

ever.

The president is also determined to try again to get a deal with Iran to end its nuclear program through negotiations. But he's also shown he's willing to wield overwhelming military force, putting a dent in the caricature of his TACO ("Trump always chucks out") diplomacy.

Still, the crisis also highlighted more troubling sides of Trump's leadership.

He committed the US to military action without preparing the nation ahead of time and politicized the mission by keeping top Democrats out of the loop. This was only the latest occasion when Trump has shown contempt for Congress's constitutional role and any sense he's the president of all Americans.

And he's still not

Iran's nuclear enrichment capacity and a stop to the nuclear threat posed to the world's number one state sponsor of terror."

Early estimates suggest that the Iranian facilities at Isfahan, Natanz and Fordow were severely damaged. But it's far too early for Trump's bravado.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Grossi, for instance, told CNN's Fareed Zakaria Sunday that Iran had "protected" a stock of 400 kg of uranium enriched to 60% — just short of the 90% grade needed to make a nuclear bomb.

Trump, meanwhile, is convinced that his strategy will bomb Iran back to the negotiating table to talk about a replacement for President Barack Obama's nuclear deal, which Trump trashed in his first term. But Iran's

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' regional network — Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in Yemen — was once seen as Iran's insurance policy against Israeli attacks on its nuclear program. But 20 months of Israeli attacks devastated its proxies and left their sponsor exposed. Israel is now a dominant regional power. And US allies like Saudi Arabia and Qatar are ascendent in a transformed Middle East.

Uncertainty meanwhile clouds Iran's domestic politics.

An already difficult transition as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's rule enters its twilight is now even more fraught. Outsiders will watch to see whether the regime's grip is loosened when the next of Iran's periodic uprisings erupts. But despite calls for regime change in Washington and Israel, more repression seems likely.

Politics are also turbulent in Israel. Netanyahu's unwillingness to reach a ceasefire with Hamas and his zeal to take the fight to Iranian soil are widely seen as a ruse to stay in power amid personal scandals and to forestall an accounting of the October 7, 2023, attacks on his watch. Still, if relative peace returns, Netanyahu may get a political bounce for taking on Iran's nuclear program — a personal calling after decades in power.

The Trump-Netanyahu dynamic will also be intriguing. The US president never stops looking for leverage. If he has the inclination, he could exploit the huge debt Israel now owes him to push for a peace agreement in Gaza.

This latest scary episode of the Trump show may be about to wrap up.

But tune in next week for something equally extreme.

edge or enriched uranium and that it could build back its facilities. He warned that the missing uranium could be inserted by Iran into any new centrifuges it has to create the core of a bomb within five days and 10 bombs within three weeks.

"That is my greatest concern. Are they racing to develop that weapon before the US or Israel can find the gas or destroy it?"

If those fears are realized, Trump's victory lap and Republican adulation will be remembered as pure political negligence and the catalyst for an even worse global crisis in future.

Iran's lobbying of missiles toward a vast US base in Qatar, easily thwarted by US and Qatari counter-measures, revealed weakness after it ceded control of its own airspace to Israeli jets. Tehran's grip has also weakened outside its borders.

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Khamenei necessary to save Iran from chaos

IRAN'S Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Ayatollah Khomeini on June 4, 1989, is far from an ordinary figure in the balance of power and hierarchical structure. Therefore, Israeli threats to assassinate him carry extremely serious consequences for the security of the entire Middle East, especially in the wake of the US military operation that targeted Iranian nuclear facilities, causing widespread destruction.

Subsequently, Iran launched several ballistic missiles that struck targets inside Israel, which were followed by an announcement from the Iranian Shoura Council approving the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, pending the approval of the Supreme National Security Council. If carried out, this step will take the conflict into a more complex escalation — one that could involve attacks on or disruption of oil tankers, directly affecting global energy prices and supply chains.

These rapidly unfolding developments may push Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu toward greater "euphoria" and an inflated sense of power, thus prompting a military operation that leads to the assassination of Khamenei, especially since the Israeli leader previously succeeded in targeting Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, his successor Hashem Safieddine, and the party's most prominent military leaders, in addition to the assassination of senior Hamas leaders such as Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar.

In the Israeli target bank, many of which have been achieved, Netanyahu fails to take into account that Iran's supreme leader cannot be equated with Nasrallah, who was killed last year. The difference in symbolic weight is enormous, and the consequences of a miscalculation are grave, as Abdulrahman Al-Rashed wrote in Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper on June 20. Al-Rashed described the idea of "targeting the leader as madness," considering that "this issue is far more serious than just another military objective: It could become a matter of ideology and trigger deeply dangerous cycles of revenge."

Al-Rashed, one of the most prominent Arab writers and a political critic of Iranian policies in the Middle East, sought in his approach to the topic to provide a long-term, realistic political perspective. He considered that the assassination of Khamenei would cause "wounds that may never heal — regardless of how decisive the Israeli or American victories are on the battlefield."

In this context, a prominent figure such as Ali Al-Sistani, the supreme religious

Hassan Al-Mustafa

authority of Shiite Muslims, issued a statement, his second since the start of the Israeli war on Iran, warning against "any threat to target its supreme religious and political leadership." He considered that "any criminal measure of such kind, in addition to violating clear religious and moral standards and constituting a blatant violation of international laws and norms, will have dire consequences for the region as a whole," potentially "spiraling out of control and leading to widespread chaos."

Although Al-Sistani is

achieved, Netanyahu fails to take into account that Iran's supreme leader cannot be equated with Nasrallah, who was killed last year. The difference in symbolic weight is enormous, and the consequences of a miscalculation are grave, as Abdulrahman Al-Rashed wrote in Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper on June 20. Al-Rashed described the idea of "targeting the leader as madness," considering that "this issue is far more serious than just another military objective: It could become a matter of ideology and trigger deeply dangerous cycles of revenge." Al-Rashed, one of the most prominent Arab writers and a political critic of Iranian policies in the Middle East, sought in his approach to the topic to provide a long-term, realistic political perspective. He considered that the assassination of Khamenei would cause "wounds that may never heal — regardless of how decisive the Israeli or American victories are on the battlefield." In this context, a prominent figure such as Ali Al-Sistani, the supreme religious authority of Shiite Muslims, issued a statement, his second since the start of the Israeli war on Iran, warning against "any threat to target its supreme religious and political leadership." He considered that "any criminal measure of such kind, in addition to violating clear religious and moral standards and constituting a blatant violation of international laws and norms, will have dire consequences for the region as a whole," potentially "spiraling out of control and leading to widespread chaos."

a classical religious leader who often prefers to refrain from political involvement, this statement indicates his deep concern, prompting him to warn against further escalation in the Middle East.

Khamenei is not seen merely as the leader of the revolution in Iran; he is also a religious authority for millions of Shiite Muslims worldwide. In terms of the number of believers who adhere to his jurisprudential rulings, he likely ranks second or third after Al-Sistani, who is regarded as the highest-ranking Shiite religious figure in the world.

From this perspective, Khamenei's assassination would give a greater ideological dimension to a conflict that already contains religious elements. This would unleash more rhetoric of extremism, hatred, and hostility between Muslims and Jews at a time when efforts should focus on interfaith dialogue and coexistence among religions and their adherents rather than fueling conflict between them.

Even politically, Khamenei remains the only leader capable of making a bold strategic decision in the Islamic Republic, one that would be binding for everyone, hard-liners and moderates, if Iran decides to sign any future agreement with the US that could end the current crisis.

The Israeli and US military strikes against Iran, and the severe losses in its leadership, mis-

sile program, and nuclear facilities, have inflicted a deep national wound, damaging the Islamic Republic's prestige in the eyes of the public, and most importantly, in the eyes of its own people, where the state now appears less capable of responding effectively. Its air defenses are ineffective, despite the significant damage it has inflicted on several Israeli cities.

This blow to Iranian national pride cannot be overcome without a bold decision, and only Khamenei has the experience, legitimacy, and authority to make such a decision. His continued

survival is, therefore, crucial, because without it, no Iranian leader, no matter how popular, would dare sign any future agreement between Washington and Tehran, as it may be perceived by the public as surrender or betrayal.

In terms of security in the Middle East, the assassination of Khamenei would trigger a wave of chaos and violence, especially if armed factions affiliated with the "Axis of Resistance" follow through with their threats.

Despite the heavy losses these factions have suffered, they retain the capacity to cause widespread destruction, and target oil refineries and military targets. Such acts could come through Iraqi factions, Hezbollah in Lebanon, or the Houthis in Yemen — an outcome that the Arab Gulf states do not want to happen.

The best course of action, as the Saudi Foreign Ministry emphasized in a statement on June 22, is to "intensify efforts in these extremely sensitive circumstances to reach a political solution that ensures an end to the crisis and opens the door to achieving security and stability in the region." The statement highlighted "the need to exert all efforts to exercise restraint, calm and avoid escalation," as the alternative will be further confrontations that may lead to an uncalculated expansion of the parties involved in the war, which will result in casualties among innocent civilians.

What the US and Israel really want from Iran

IN his 2002 testimony to the United States Congress, then former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US lawmakers that an invasion of Iraq was necessary for winning the "war on terror" and preventing Iraq and terrorist groups from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. He further claimed that the war would be quick and would usher in a new age of Western-friendly democracy, not just in Iraq, but across the region, including Iran. Neither proclamation was true.

As many experts and officials already knew before the 2003 invasion began, Saddam Hussein's regime did not have weapons of mass destruction and held no ties to al-Qaeda. The war was bound to cause widespread devastation, instability, insecurity, unspeakable suffering, chaos and the breakdown of governance. And that is what happened. Iraq today

is at best a fragile state with enormous economic and political challenges.

After Israel and then the US attacked Iran earlier this month, many analysts rushed to comment on how the two allies have supposedly failed to learn the lessons of the Iraq war and are now repeating the same mistakes in Iran. These analyses would have been accurate had the actual goals of the 2003 invasion been to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to establish democracy. But they were not.

For the US and Israel, the desired outcome of the war was an Iraq that would not pose any resistance to the Israeli settler-colonial project in Palestine and its role as an agent of US imperial power in the region. This is also the desired outcome in Iran today.

Just like the claims about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq proved completely false, the claims that Iran was on the "verge of" developing a nuclear

weapon have no grounds. No real evidence that Tehran was in fact close to gaining nuclear capabilities has been put forward. Instead, we have been presented with a truly unmatched level of hypocrisy and lies.

Here we have a situation where two nuclear powers — one which stands out as the only state in history to use, not once but twice, a nuclear weapon and another that refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has a mass-murder-suicide type of nuclear doctrine — are undertaking illegal "pre-emptive" aggression under the guise of stopping nuclear proliferation. Clearly, the US and Israel are not after Iran's nuclear programme. They are after Iran as a regional power, and that is why regime change has already been floated in public.

In addition to multiple statements from Netanyahu, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz, and other Israeli officials, US Senators

Lindsey Graham and Ted Cruz have also called for toppling the Iranian government. On Sunday, US President Donald Trump joined the calls for regime change in Iran with a post on social media.

The Iranian people are now being encouraged to "stand up" and fight for their "freedom." But freedom and democracy in Iran are certainly not what Israel and the US aim for. Why? Because a free and democratic Iran would not serve their interests and accept the brutalities of a settler-colonial project in its vicinity.

They would rather see Iran return to the violent, tyrannical monarchy under the Pahlavi dynasty, which was overthrown in a popular revolution in 1979, or any other political force willing to do their bidding.

If that doesn't happen, Israel and the US would rather have a fragmented, weak, chaotic, destabilised Iran, marred by a civil war.

Muhannad Ayyash

That would suit their interests, just as a war-torn Iraq did. Weakening regional powers in the Middle East and spreading instability through subversion and aggression is a well-established policy goal that the political elites in Israel and the US have jointly embraced since the 1990s.

A policy document called Clean Break, authored by former US Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle and other neo-conservatives in 1996, outlined this strategy of attacking Middle Eastern states under the pretext of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to secure Israel's strategic interests.

Perle et al did not come up with something radically new; they simply built on the well-known imperial strategy of sowing division and chaos in order to facilitate imperial domination.

But this strategy is not without risks. Just like the

collapse of the Iraqi state paved the way for violent non-state actors to emerge and for Iran to solidify its position as a regional power challenging US-Israeli interests, a weakened or fragmented Iranian state can result in the same dynamics.

On a more global scale, the actions of the US and Israel are encouraging more countries to pursue nuclear weapons. The lesson that states are drawing from the US-Israeli aggression on Iran is that nuclear weapons are necessary to acquire precisely to prevent such attacks. Thus, we are likely heading towards more proliferation as a result of this war, not less.

The Israeli state does not seem to be concerned about proliferation as long as the chaos and destruction it spreads in the region allows it to achieve its strategic goal of eradicating the Palestinian struggle once and for all, and ending all resistance to its settler colonisation project. Israel, in a nutshell, wants the

entire region on its knees and will stop at nothing to achieve that objective. This is because it does not really have to foot the bill of regional instability.

By contrast, US interests are directly impacted when the Middle East descends into chaos. A dysfunctional Iraq or a weakened Iran may serve the US in the short term, but in the longer term, the instability can disrupt its grander plans for control of global energy markets and containing China.

The rest of the world will also feel the ripple effect of this unjustified aggression, just as it did after the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Given the brutal, decades-long fallout of that war, the global response to the US-Israeli aggression against Iran has been self-defeatingly subdued; some European countries have appeared to endorse the attack, despite the many negative economic impacts they could face as a result of this war.

If governments truly



In brief

Finch praises Babar and Rizwan ahead of BBL

SYDNEY (Web Desk): Former Australian cricket captain Aaron Finch has lauded the inclusion of top Pakistani cricketers in the upcoming season of the Big Bash League (BBL), stating that their participation will offer local players a valuable opportunity to compete against some of the best talent in the world. Speaking to the media, Finch expressed his enthusiasm for seeing players like Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi, and Mohammad Rizwan feature in the BBL, calling them "world-class" athletes whose presence will elevate the league's standard and competitiveness. Recalling his own experience, Finch highlighted Afridi's impact, stating: "Shaheen Shah Afridi has dismissed me twice during my career." He also lauded Azam's batting skills, saying that the former Pakistan skipper plays with elegance rather than relying solely on power. Additionally, Finch welcomed Rizwan's participation in the forthcoming BBL.

Pakistan into semifinals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan doubles team of Noor Zaman and Nasir Iqbal have reached the semifinals of the 2nd Asian Squash Championships 2025 at Sarawak, Malaysia. According to details, Pakistan beat Korea in the quarterfinals of the championship by 2-1 (11-3, 5-11, 11-4) in 37 minutes. Earlier in the day, Pakistan team of Noor Zaman and Nasir Iqbal stood first in their pool after securing a convincing win over Chinese Taipei by 11-2, 11-9. Pakistan will face Malaysia in the semifinals on Wednesday.

Raducanu battles into second round

EASTBOURNE (Agencies): An emotional Emma Raducanu produced an impressive fightback to reach the second round at Eastbourne and keep her Wimbledon preparations on track. British number one Raducanu trailed American Ann Li by a set and a break in difficult conditions on the south coast. But the 22-year-old wrestled control of a topsy-turvy second set before finishing strongly to clinch a 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-1 victory. Raducanu, who held back tears after securing victory, will meet Australian teenager Maya Joint for a place in the quarterfinals. "I want to thank the crowd for getting me through some really sticky moments," Raducanu said in her on-court interview. "It really meant a lot to me and I'm really proud of how I fought back after losing the first set. It was tough, it was up and down. But from the middle of the second set I think I found another gear and another level."

Pant reprimanded for dissent

LEEDS (AFP): India wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant has been handed an official reprimand for showing dissent during the ongoing first Test against England at Headingley, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced Tuesday. Pant was found to have breached Level One of the ICC's code of conduct, with one demerit point added to the disciplinary record of the India vice-captain, for whom it was the first offence in 24 months. The incident occurred Sunday during England's first innings when Pant was having a discussion with the umpires regarding the condition of the ball, while Ben Stokes and Harry Brook were at the crease.

Muhammad Asif moves in Asian Championship semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani cueist Muhammad Asif has reached the semifinal of the Asian 6 Red & Team Championship 2025 at Colombo, Sri Lanka.

According to details, in the quarterfinals, Asif beat Lim Kok Leong of Malaysia 5-3 (67(67)-0, 43-21, 27-19, 5-59(31), 32(32)-41(34), 38-25, 0-68(68), 41-21).

Meanwhile in the Pre quarterfinals, Sunny Wang of Singapore outplayed Pakistan's Muhammad Sajjad 5-0 (24-22, 32-15, 43-20, 44-42, 39-11), Asif

downed Neang Tola of Cambodia 5-1 (16-27, 48-25, 35-32, 52-9, 43(39)-25, 40-10) and Ming Wa Man of Hong Kong defeated Awaits Munir of Pakistan 5-3 (37-0,

74(74)-0, 41(36)-5, 32-24, 26-41, 22-43, 4-36, 43-0). Asif will face Thor Chuan Leong of Malaysia in the semifinal on Wednesday.



Pakistan claims gold, bronze at Al Bareth Int'l Sailing Regatta



ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's national sailing team delivered a commendable performance at Al Bareth International Sailing Regatta 2025, securing one gold and one bronze medal during the event held in Bahrain from June 19 to 23.

The prestigious regional competition saw participation from top sailing teams representing Pakistan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates,

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, said a press release issued on Tuesday.

The regatta featured races in the ILCA 7 (Laser Standard), ILCA 4 (Laser 4.7) and Optimist classes.

Pakistan's Muzammil Hassan claimed the gold medal in the ILCA 7 class, showcasing exceptional skill and composure on the waters.

His compatriot Hamza Ejaz also made the country proud by winning

bronze medal in the same category.

In the Optimist Class (Under-15), Master Muhammad Suleman narrowly missed the podium, finishing a respectable fourth among a strong field of young sailors.

Meanwhile, in the ILCA 4 category (Under-18), Muzammil Hussain secured the sixth position, adding to the team's overall competitive presence at the event.

Former India spinner Dilip Doshi dies aged 77

NEW DELHI (AFP): India spin great Dilip Doshi has died aged 77, with former cricketers praising a man they said had been a "gentleman to the core".

Doshi died in London on Monday, Indian media reported.

The left-arm spinner was already in his thirties when he made his Test debut in 1979, and finished with 114 wickets in 33 matches.

Doshi also played 15 one-day internationals for India between 1980 and 1982.

India batting legend Sachin Tendulkar praised Doshi as a "warm-hearted soul", adding he will "miss those cricketing conversations".

Former India all-rounder Ravi Shastri, himself a left-arm spinner, said Doshi was "a gentleman to the core and a fine, fine bowler".

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) also paid tribute to the former spinner.

Before play started on the fifth and final day of the first Test between England and India at Headingley on Tuesday, the teams lined up on the outfield to observe a minute's silence in memory of Doshi, with players and officials wearing black armbands as a mark of respect.

A bespectacled Doshi carried forward the Indian spin legacy started by the famous quartet of Bishan Singh Bedi, Erapalli Prasanna, Srinivas Venkataraghavan and Bhagwath Chandrasekhar.

Doshi, an effective bowler even on the most placid pitches, also played English county cricket, including a long stint with Nottinghamshire.

Club World Cup prize money does not mean more pressure: Maresca

PHILADELPHIA (AFP/APP): Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca has insisted that the club's owners are not putting extra pressure on him to win the Club World Cup as a result of the enormous financial incentives on offer at FIFA's new tournament.

World football's governing body has dangled the carrot of a total \$1 billion in prize money to the 32 competing teams in the United States. If Chelsea, as one of the 12 European representatives, go on to win the trophy on July 13, they can take home around \$125 million (£92.4m) as a cash reward.

That could give the Stamford Bridge side a considerable advantage over many of their English and European rivals going forward into next season.

However, Maresca claims money has not come up in discussions with the club's hierarchy around the ongoing competition. "The owners just want the best for us and for the players game by game and they are not talking about the final prize or the final reward in terms of money," the Italian told reporters in Philadelphia ahead of Tuesday's match against Esperance of Tunis.

"They never put pressure on me or the players in terms of we need to win this tournament because of the money," Chelsea must avoid defeat against the Tunisian four-time African champions in order to qualify for the last 16 from Group D. That is after they were beaten 3-1 by Brazilian giants Flamengo in their last game, when Maresca appeared to prioritise tactical experiments over the need for results.

Playing Cole Palmer on the right of a front three was not a success, as the England international struggled to make a big impact

on the game. "Off the ball Cole was defending a little more wide, but the position on the ball was exactly the same position as during the season," Maresca explained.

"If it is a good moment or not to try new things, I don't know. But we also are here to think about the future, and to try different systems. Last year we played three or four different systems during the season. The idea is to continue to evolve and improve, and to try different things."

- Heat factor -

Philadelphia is sweating under a fierce heatwave at the moment, and while the 9:00 pm local time kick-off on Wednesday should mean that is not a huge factor for the game itself, it has made preparations tricky. "It is almost impossible to train because of the weather. Now we are just trying to save energy for the game," said Maresca, who is likely to rotate his squad and make numerous changes to the starting line-up.

Striker Nicolas Jackson is suspended after being sent off against Flamengo having come on as a substitute only a few minutes earlier. Chelsea won their opening match at the tournament, defeating Los Angeles FC 2-0 in Atlanta, before the reverse at the hands of Flamengo.

Esperance bounced back from a defeat to the Brazilians as they beat LAFC 1-0 in Nashville in their last outing -- that is the only victory so far in six matches at this Club World Cup for a North African team. If Chelsea go through they will head to Charlotte for a last-16 tie on Saturday against the winners of Group C, which could be Bayern Munich.

"If we go through we can talk about Bayern," said Maresca. "In this moment it has to be about tomorrow. Football is full of surprises."

es." Maher Kanzari, the coach of the Tunisian champions, said his team were ready for a 'historical' battle against the Blues.

"We are prepared and we have to fulfil the expectations of our technical team, of our fans, of the Tunisian public. It will be a historical game," he said. "We will be well prepared, especially mentally. Everyone is waiting for this game and we are really proud of what we have achieved so far. Hopefully we will do what it takes."

Chelsea's Jackson given two-game ban for red card: Chelsea striker Nicolas Jackson has been given a two-match ban for his red card in Friday's 3-1 Club World Cup defeat by Flamengo. Jackson was dismissed just four minutes after coming on as a late substitute for a studs-up challenge on Flamengo defender Lucas Ayrton.

The Senegal forward was given an automatic one-match ban that rules him out of tonight's final group game against African side ES Tunis (02:00 BST).

But a Fifa disciplinary committee reviewed the incident and decided to extend the ban as it was deemed serious foul play, meaning Jackson will miss Chelsea's last-16 match should they progress.

The disciplinary committee's decision is final and cannot be appealed against. Enzo Maresca's side need to avoid defeat by ES Tunis in Philadelphia to reach the knockout stage.

The dismissal was Jackson's second in four matches and means he is now suspended in two competitions - the Premier League and Club World Cup. Alongside his eight yellow cards, it means Jackson has a combined record of 10 cards this season.

Wimbledon plan to honour Murray with statue



LONDON (AFP): Wimbledon organisers are planning to honour two-time champion Andy Murray with a statue at the All England Club.

Murray, who ended a 77-year wait for a British winner of the men's singles title in 2013 before winning

again in 2016, retired after the Paris Olympics last year. Wimbledon hope the statue will be revealed in 2027 during the championship's 150th anniversary.

"We are looking to have a statue of Andy Murray here (Wimbledon) and we're working closely with

him and his team," All England Club chair Debbie Jevans told the ainslie & ainslie Performance People podcast. "The ambition is that we would unveil that at the 150th anniversary of our first Championship, which was 1877."

"He's got to rightly be very involved in that and him and his team will be."

A bronze statue of Fred Perry, the last British men's champion before Murray, was erected at Wimbledon in 1984 to mark the 50th anniversary of his first singles championship.

Tennis greats John McEnroe and Billie Jean King are among those that have previously called for Murray to be honoured in similar fashion at Wimbledon.

Punjab Mas-Wrestling C'ship starts

FAISALABAD (APP): Punjab Mas-Wrestling Championship has been kicked off in Samanabad Sports Complex here on Tuesday.

Talking to the media persons, President Pakistan Mas-Wrestling Federation Nawab Furqan Khan flanked by Patron-in-Chief Punjab Mas-Wrestling Association Sagib Waseem and national champion Rizwan Khan said that the Punjab Mas-

Wrestling Championship was arranged on self-help basis and this event would feature competitions in fifteen weight categories.

He said that the wrestling teams from ten divisions would participate in the championship. Each division would field a team of fifteen athletes including eight male and seven female participants to showcase the growing inclusivity of the sport, he added.

He said that Mas-Wrestling is set to be included in the 2036 Olympic Games, highlighting its rising global profile.

He said that Pakistan Mas-Wrestling Federation would continue to operate through self-help and private sponsorships.

This game would soon be formally organized at the grassroots level and introduced in schools, colleges and universities nationwide, he added.



LEEDS: Jasprit Bumrah appeals unsuccessfully.

Messi's Miami and PSG progress to set up Club WC reunion

MIAMI (AFP): Inter Miami's Lionel Messi faces a tantalising reunion with former club Paris Saint-Germain in the Club World Cup last 16 after both sides on Monday progressed to the knockout phase.

Miami drew 2-2 with

Palmeiras to go through second in Group A, after the Brazilian side fought back from two goals down to seal top spot.

They now face an all-Brazil clash against Botafogo, who lost 1-0 to Atletico Madrid but pro-

gressed from Group B in second at the expense of the Spaniards.

Champions of Europe PSG won the group with a 2-0 victory over Seattle Sounders, paving the way for the clash with Messi and surprise package Miami.

But Palmeiras struck twice in the last 10 minutes at Hard Rock Stadium through Paulinho and Mauricio to ensure they went through. Suarez, Messi, Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba and Miami coach Javier Mascherano will also face their former coach Luis Enrique, who guided them to the treble when in charge at Barcelona in 2015.

"We're talking about the champions of Europe. We know many of their players and their coach, who I was lucky enough to have coached me, and I've always said he is the best in the world," said Alba.

"I will connect with good friends there but once

Goals from Tadeo Allende and Luis Suarez had Miami on course for a second victory in the tournament after their shock win over Porto.

But Palmeiras struck twice in the last 10 minutes at Hard Rock Stadium through Paulinho and Mauricio to ensure they went through. Suarez, Messi, Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba and Miami coach Javier Mascherano will also face their former coach Luis Enrique, who guided them to the treble when in charge at Barcelona in 2015.

European champions PSG bounced back from their surprise defeat by Botafogo with a comfortable win in Seattle.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Achraf Hakimi scored either side of half-time as the Ligue 1 champions advanced as group winners because of Botafogo's late

the game starts, we will compete, try to beat them, and why can't we do it? This is football."

Mascherano said Miami's progress had elevated Major League Soccer.

"It's a historic night for MLS, because we are into the best 16 teams in the world. All of the MLS has to be proud of Inter Miami," he said.

Portuguese side Porto and Egypt's Al Ahly were eliminated after a thrilling 4-4 draw which was not enough for either team to overhaul Palmeiras or Miami.

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defeat to Atletico Madrid in Pasadena.

"It wasn't easy because the pitch was very different to what we are used to in Europe so we couldn't play with the fluidity that we like, but we adapted," said PSG coach Enrique.

PSG top scorer Ousmane Dembele played no part for a third game running after travelling to the tournament with an injury.

Atletico out

Atletico's 4-0 defeat by Paris Saint-Germain in their opener left them needing a big win against Botafogo to progress.

Former France international Antoine Griezmann scored the game's only goal, lashing home a Julian Alvarez cross in the 87th minute to give Atletico a victory that ultimately was in vain.

"We're frustrated that we didn't qualify — we had

six points," Atletico coach Simeone said afterwards.

"At the end of the day we were punished because it wasn't enough."

Atletico needed a two-goal swing and were upset at penalty appeals being turned down.

"I've never seen anything like it, to be honest, I think we should have been awarded two penalties," complained winger Giuliano Simeone, the coach's son.

On Tuesday, already qualified Bayern Munich face Benfica and eliminated Auckland City take on Boca Juniors in Group C, with one more last 16 spot on the line.

The English Premier League's Chelsea later tackle Esperance Tunis with the winners to progress alongside Flamengo, who face Los Angeles FC.



In brief

DG PHA directs to enhance horticulture works

RAWALPINDI (APP): Director General, Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi, Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, on Tuesday, directed the officials concerned to enhance the horticulture work at the hill station, Murree. During a visit to review the recreational facilities for tourists, he directed to improve the arrangements for the care, cultivation and decoration of lush plants and colourful flowers at all important points. Ranjha said that beautiful designs have been embroidered on the walls, and all resources were utilised for the beautification of the hill station to make it more attractive for the tourists. PHA is trying to make Murree beautiful and green and provide a good entertainment environment to the public. He said that by promoting a green environment, "We can also reduce the effects of environmental pollution and the heat wave."

Pakistan stands for peace: Bushra

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Senator Bushra said on Tuesday that Pakistan believes in peace and diplomacy, not war. Speaking to a private news channel, she called for global maturity amid Middle East tensions, adding that ego and military muscle only lead to the loss of lives, resources and time. Commenting on Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, she noted that the delegation was tasked with promoting a message of peace globally. "Pakistan wants peace, but peace must not be mistaken for weakness," she asserted. Referring to parallels between Indian and Israeli aggression, she condemned false allegations and unilateral military actions. She also criticized the world powers for ignoring treaties, stating that if countries walk out of agreements, no global law will stand.

CTP chalk out special traffic plan

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have chalked out a special traffic plan for Muharram-ul-Haram to maintain smooth traffic flow. More than 930 traffic personnel will perform duty across the city during Muharram. According to Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi, Beenish Fatima, the plan has been designed to provide citizens with the best possible traffic arrangements. The plan includes 10 DSPs, 72 senior traffic wardens, and over 850 traffic wardens and assistants, who will be deployed on special duty during Muharram ul Haram. During Muharram processions, roads will be closed for all types of traffic and blocked with wire barricades. Alternative routes will be provided to avoid congestion on roads. Special efforts will be made to keep traffic flowing smoothly on these alternate roads, she added. The CTO held a special meeting at Traffic Headquarters, Race Course, with all DSPs, Circle Incharges, Sector Incharges, and Duty Officers. She instructed that vehicles and motorcycles must be parked at least 500 yards away from procession routes. If there is a ban on pollution riding, it must be strictly enforced. Strict action will be taken against vehicles and motorcycles without number plates or those using black paper. Such vehicles will be impounded to the police station. Beenish Fatima emphasized team work and coordination with the district police must be ensured to maintain peace and security.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtaev calls on Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. —APP Photo

Pirzada, Uzbekistan envoy discuss collaboration in communal development

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada met with Alisher Tukhtaev, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, at the Ministry of Housing and Works on Tuesday.

The discussion focused on collaboration in housing and communal development, with both sides engaging in a constructive dialogue to explore potential areas of cooperation. They also deliberated on sustainable urban growth, paving the way for future partnerships between the two nations.

The minister welcomed the Ambassador and appreciated Uzbekistan's fast-growing economy, acknowledging the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, especially in view of Pakistan's rising housing needs and increasing water scarcity.

He stressed the importance of adopting innova-

tive and sustainable solutions, such as recycling, green construction practices, and resource-efficient urban development models. Ambassador Tukhtaev highlighted the deep-rooted cultural, religious, and historical ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, and underscored Uzbekistan's expertise in areas critical to urban development.

He noted that one of the key outcomes of the Tashkent meetings held in February 2025 was the establishment of a Joint Working Group on Housing and Communal Services.

The ambassador elaborated on Uzbekistan's economic reforms, a notable increase in Foreign Direct Investment, and the ongoing transformation of its housing and construction sector.

He expressed readiness to cooperate in training and capacity-building initiatives in housing develop-

ment, water recycling, green housing, and social infrastructure.

He also offered Uzbekistan's support in sharing models and experiences related to rainwater harvesting, high-rise construction, smart and green housing, and affordable housing for low-income groups.

Moreover, the ambassador proposed policy collaboration and knowledge exchange in public procurement, legal and institutional reforms, and emerging construction trends, emphasizing Uzbekistan's willingness to share its technical expertise during a period of construction sector growth.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation, with a shared resolve to translate their longstanding diplomatic relations into practical economic and industrial partnerships in the housing and urban development sectors.

ANF recovers over 32 kgs of drugs worth Rs 6.82 mln

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting four operations across the country, recovered as many as 32,600 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 6.82 million and arrested four suspects, including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday. He informed that 2.4 kgs of hashish were recovered from the possession of a woman near Haji Camp Terminal GT Road Peshawar.

As many as 15 kgs of opium were recovered from a vehicle near Industrial Road, Peshawar and the accused was arrested.

In another operation, 13.2 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Mandi Mor, Islamabad and the suspect was arrested. As much as 2 kgs of hashish were recovered from the possession of an accused near Sugar Mill in Peshawar.

Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

IRSA releases 261,853 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 261,853 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 349,202 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1465.22 feet which was 63.22 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 226,300 cusecs and 153,100 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1171.50 feet, which was 121.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 29,149 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 198,359, 139,428, 86,236 and 35,045 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 31,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 29,439 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Pakistan–Saudi ties rooted in brotherhood, not transactions: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday said Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia is based on shared faith, history, and mutual respect, rather than transactional interests.

He made these remarks during a meeting with Major General (Rtd) Dr. Abdul Rahman bin Sanhat Al-Harbi, head of the Saudi-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, at Parliament House. Gilani recalled his successful visit to Saudi Arabia last year and the reciprocal visit by the Chairman of the Shura Council to Pakistan. He said these high-level exchanges highlight the growing importance of parliamentary diplomacy.

The Chairman called for institutionalizing regular dialogue between the Senate of Pakistan and the Saudi Shura Council through frequent high-level visits and enhanced people-to-people contacts.

He also shared his impressions from meetings with Saudi leadership, noting that both countries enjoy deep-rooted sentiments of mutual love and respect. He thanked the Kingdom for consistently improving Hajj and Umrah facilities for Pakistani pilgrims. Gilani praised the role of over 2.5 million Pakistanis working in Saudi Arabia, describing them as vital contributors to both Saudi development and Pakistan's economy through remittances.

He appreciated the Kingdom's efforts in taking care of the Pakistani diaspora.

Reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering commitment to its alliance with Saudi Arabia, the Senate Chairman expressed hope that the Friendship Group would help usher in a new era of strategic and future-oriented cooperation. "We also look forward to the visit of His Highness, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia," he said.

He highlighted the historical depth of Pakistan–Saudi defence and security ties and said economic and trade cooperation has also played a key role in strengthening the partnership. Referring to the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Gilani said the forum offers a one-window solution for promoting trade and investment across various sectors. He called for early implementation of the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed between the two countries, and reiterated Pakistan's desire to further enhance its fraternal ties with the Kingdom.

Addressing members of the Saudi delegation and parliamentarians at a reception, Gilani termed the visit a sign of mutual trust and goodwill between the two brotherly nations.

Earlier, the Saudi delegation arrived at Parliament House, where they received a warm welcome from the Senate Chairman. The delegation's head thanked Gilani for the hospitality and said Pakistan holds a key place in the region. He added that both countries highly value their strong bilateral ties and wide-ranging cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: A police official on motorcycle helps an out of order motorcyclist by pushing with his foot to reach his destination. —APP Photo

Zardari fulfills Shaheed Benazir's vision: Rubina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid Tuesday said that President Asif Ali Zardari has turned the dream of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto into reality through the launch of the Benazir Hunarmand Program—a milestone that stands as a proud achievement for BISP.

Addressing in a cake-cutting ceremony organized by BISP employees at the BISP Headquarters to mark the 72nd birthday of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Senator Rubina Khalid paid rich tributes to the iconic leader, calling her vision and courage a guiding force for the institution.

"Through BISP, we have worked to make the lives of deserving individuals easier. Now, with the Benazir Hunarmand Program, we aim to improve their quality of life and empower them to become self-

reliant," she said.

"If we fulfill this noble mission with sincerity, the gates of heaven will open for us", she said.

She emphasized the need to instill confidence among the most deserving women of society, ensuring they are not subjected to fear or exploitation. "We must work together to counter negative perceptions, address complaints effectively, and build an environment where no injustice is tolerated," she asserted.

Calling the BISP team a united family with a shared purpose, she said every initiative—especially the newly launched Hunarmand Program—must be transformed into a success story.

Paying tribute to Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Senator Rubina Khalid said, "Leaders are not merely made—they are born. Bilawal Bhutto

Zardari is a living example of this truth."

She praised his fearless leadership, global recognition, and powerful representation of Pakistan's stance on international forums, describing him as a proud reflection of the legacy of both Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Earlier, Sardar Azmat, President of the BISP Officers Association, and Sardar Shiraz, President of the All Pakistan BISP Employees Welfare Association, also addressed the gathering and shared their thoughts on the occasion.

The event concluded with Senator Rubina Khalid and BISP staff jointly cutting the birthday cake in honour of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, reaffirming their dedication to her mission of empowerment and social justice.

NADRA overhauls child registration system to enhance identity protection and curb human smuggling

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Database and Registration Authority, upon the recommendations of Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi and with the subsequent approval of Federal Cabinet, has implemented major changes to its Child Registration Certificate (CRC), also known as Form-B, introducing a revised structure that aims to strengthen child identity verification and block loopholes previously exploited in human smuggling.

NADRA's spokesperson and Director Public Engagement, Syed Shababhat Ali told Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) on Tuesday that the previous system lacked biometric or photographic identification for individuals under the age of 18. This absence of post-birth identification measures created vulnerabilities in the national registration system, making it susceptible to misuse by organized networks engaged in illegal migration and trafficking.

To counter these threats and ensure a secure and verifiable registration sys-

tem, NADRA has now discontinued the earlier group form method that allowed multiple children to be registered collectively on a single form. With the amendments in NIC Rules 2002 notified on 19th Jun 2025, every child will require a separate, individual CRC form, enhancing an accuracy and accountability.

The new system introduces age-specific protocols for registration. For children under the age of three, NADRA will issue a CRC without a photograph or biometric data, and this certificate will automatically expire when the child turns three. From the age of three to under ten years, the child's photograph becomes a mandatory requirement, and in NADRA centres equipped with advanced facilities, an iris scan may also be recorded. Once the child reaches ten years of age, a full biometric profile, including fingerprints, photographs, and iris scan (where available), is compulsory. The certificate issued at this stage remains valid until the child turns 18.

An important condition under the new policy is that parents must now

present a birth registration certificate issued by the relevant Union Council before they can obtain a CRC from NADRA. Without this official document, the authority will not proceed with the registration process.

Mr. Shababhat emphasized that these changes were introduced to preserve the integrity of family structures in the national database and to ensure that only genuine familial links are reflected in official records. The updated system, he said, would protect the identities of Pakistani citizens from unauthorized inclusion and identity manipulation.

He further clarified that despite the introduction of biometric requirements and expiry dates, there has been no increase in the CRC processing fee, which remains the same. NADRA, he noted, has remained committed to offering affordable identity services. "When it comes to serve the registration of Pakistani nationals, Our objective has never been profit. It has always been to protect and authenticate the identity of Pakistanis," he stated.

In addition to reforms in child registration, NADRA has made updates to the basic National Identity Card, commonly referred to as the non-smart or simple card. This version of the card now features a QR code to support digital verification, which can be scanned through NADRA's official mobile application. Moreover, to assist citizens applying for travel documents, the applicant's name and father's name are now printed in both English and Urdu. This update is particularly aimed to facilitate card holders who want to obtain their passport to ensure consistency in data (particularly spellings of their name) between national ID cards and passports, reducing the likelihood of discrepancies in spelling or transliteration.

Mr. Shababhat reiterated that the first-time issuance of the non-smart NIC upon reaching the age of 18 remains entirely free of charge. While citizens are later given the choice to apply for a smart card, which includes an electronic chip and enhanced security features, the non-smart card remains a valid and fully functional identity document.

However, the NADRA spokesperson expressed serious concern over the growing number of citizens holding expired identity cards. Citing internal statistics, he revealed that more than 10 million citizens are currently using expired NICs, often unaware of the risks involved. He warned that expired cards can hinder access to emergency services, delay legal documentation, and pose significant challenges in critical situations such as hospital admissions or travel.

"When a citizen's ID card expires, it reflects a decade-old record. It becomes necessary for NADRA to update that individual's biometric information to ensure continued authenticity," he said.

Mr. Shababhat concluded by underlining that these comprehensive reforms were not only about data management but also about national security and identity protection. With improved verification processes, individual CRCs, biometric integration, and expiry tracking, NADRA aims to close long-standing gaps and reinforce the legitimacy and security of Pakistan's identity infrastructure.

Enmity claims two lives

BAMYAN (Pajhwok): Two people have been killed in a clash in the first security district of Bamyan city due to personal enmity on Tuesday. Saboor Farzan Sighani, a spokesman for the Bamyan governor said that two residents of ‘Sarasiab’ village were killed in a clash. He added that the incident took place last night. He cited personal enmity as the motive behind the incident and said, without giving details, that an investigation has been launched into the matter.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil Hajj 28, 1446 — Wednesday, June 25, 2025

Radio resumed broadcasts

KABUL (Khaama Press): Ruh-e-Farda resumed its broadcasts after a two-month break, now accessible in Kabul via antennas and globally through satellite. Radio and Television “Rah-e-Farda” has resumed its broadcasts after a two-month hiatus. The station made this announcement on Tuesday. “Rah-e-Farda” is now accessible in Kabul via regular antennas and globally through the Turkmen Alam satellite, ensuring widespread availability for its viewers.

Amir criticizes US over frozen Afghan assets

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting foreign minister of Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi, criticized the United States for freezing Afghanistan’s foreign reserves, calling the move illegal and demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the country’s assets.

Muttaqi stressed that the US decision has severely disrupted the natural course of Afghanistan’s economic development.

He also urged member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to fulfill their humanitarian and Islamic responsibilities by utilizing all available means to help lift the sanctions.

In his statement, Muttaqi said: “After two decades of

war in Afghanistan, the US has frozen the national wealth of the Afghan people, creating major challenges for the country’s natural economic growth. I once again call on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its member states to ensure the release of Afghanistan’s frozen central bank assets without further delay or obstacles.”

Referring to Afghanistan’s strategic location in the heart of Asia, Muttaqi noted that the country has the potential to become a vital hub for trade and transit among Islamic nations.

He added: “Afghanistan, recognized as the heart of Asia, is ready to serve as a key gateway for transit, trade, and economic connec-

tivity among Islamic countries. We are prepared to play a constructive role within the framework of the OIC Strategic Economic Agenda in areas such as regional connectivity, energy, logistics, and investment.”

Economic experts believe that if Afghanistan focuses on domestic production and exports during this crisis, it could ease some of the pressure resulting from international sanctions.

Economic analyst Mir Shakir Yaqubi told TOLONews: “In order to mitigate the negative effects of sanctions and global restrictions imposed on Afghanistan, the government must fulfill certain essential responsibilities. One of these is enhancing

domestic production capacities. Achieving this requires cooperation from neighboring countries so that Afghanistan can at least play an effective role in transport, transit, and global trade systems. Additionally, alongside boosting production capacities, export volumes must also be increased.”

This comes more than four years after Afghanistan’s foreign assets were frozen, with no significant steps taken by the international community thus far.

Previously, a deputy minister of the Ministry of Economy announced that Afghanistan is working to establish joint banks with China, Russia, and Iran to reduce the impact of banking sanctions.

Traders participate in Kunming Expo

KABUL (TOLONews): Several Afghan entrepreneurs who participated in the 9th International Kunming Trade Expo in China have expressed satisfaction with their involvement in the event. They stated that during the exhibition, they successfully sold products and held discussions with international buyers.

Mohammad Omar, who had a booth at the expo, said: “We had excellent sales, and even local shopkeepers came and bought a lot from our booth. We are very pleased with this exhibition.”

Mohammad Shafi, another Afghan exhibitor, said: “The expo was very impressive and successful. God willing, the next exhibition will be held on the 25th in Shenyang.”

This six-day exhibition hosted over 1,400 companies from various countries, with 88 booths specifically allocated to Afghan traders.

According to the Afghan Carpet Producers and Exporters Union, active participation of Afghan entrepreneurs in such exhibitions presents a valuable opportunity for the growth of the carpet sector.

Abdulmanan Haidari, Executive Director of the Union, said: “Those who traveled to China had the chance to participate in two exhibitions. As a result, they are now in a better position to operate effectively, build stronger connections, and sign better agreements and contracts.”

During the event, Deputy Chief Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi stated that the Islamic Emirate seeks to expand commercial relations with China and other South Asian countries.

Reduction in industrial park land prices

LOGAR (BNA): Officials at the Logar Directorate of Industry and Commerce say that due to the efforts of this office and the support of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the cost of one jerib (approximately 0.2 hectares) of land in the industrial parks of Mohammad Agha district has been reduced from \$30,000 to \$15,000 to encourage better investment opportunities. Additionally, 250 jeribs of land have been made ready for distribution to industrialists.

Sanagol Golzar, the media officer for the Directorate of Industry and Commerce, stated that currently 1,500 jeribs of land have been allocated in the industrial parks of Mohammad Agha district, of which 250 jeribs are now ready for distribution.

Golzar added that the land distribution process for industrialists and investors in this township has begun. In the first phase, land has been allocated to six industrial and manufacturing companies, one of which has already started its initial operations. The remaining five companies are expected to commence their practical activities in production and industry soon.

The Logar Directorate of Industry and Commerce has called on domestic traders as well as Afghan businesspeople operating abroad to take advantage of the opportunities available in the Mohammad Agha Industrial Park and contribute to the country’s economic growth.

Neighboring countries must ensure protection of Afghan refugees

KABUL (TOLONews): The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has called for the protection of Afghan refugees in Iran amid the ongoing conflict.

Arafat Jamal, head of UNHCR operations for Afghanistan, expressed concern over recent clashes between India and Pakistan and the rising tensions in Iran. He urged host countries to continue their commitment to the safety and dignity of Afghan refugees living within their borders.

“We are witnessing growing instability in the region,” Jamal said. “Recently, we saw clashes between India and Pakistan, and now we are seeing tensions in Iran. We are deeply concerned and alarmed by these developments. We urge neighboring countries to continue protecting refugees and treating them with dignity, even amid instability.”

Jamal emphasized that UNHCR, in cooperation with its partners and current Afghan authorities, is working to ensure the safe and successful return of Afghan refugees in a way that contributes to long-term stability and economic development.

He reiterated his call for dialogue among host countries on the issue of refugee returns: “My message to countries in the region is one of cooperation. Let us not waste the generosity and support extended over the past 40 years. Let us come together at one table to discuss how



to support the voluntary return of Afghans, and find solutions for those who cannot return. Let us explore how this process can become a source of peace, stability, and growth.”

Jamal also appealed for greater international support: “My final message is to the international community. You have supported programs in Afghanistan for 40 years and have consistently stood by the refugees. I ask you again: do not abandon us at this critical moment. With war on one border and instability on others, this is not the time to turn away from Afghanistan.”

This call comes just days before the deadlines set by Iran and Pakistan for the departure of Afghan refugees. Pakistan has set its deadline for the 9th of this month, and Iran for the 15th.

Information on Afghan-American detained: United States offers \$5 million reward

KABUL (Ariana News): The United States has announced a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the location and safe return of Mahmoud Habibi, an Afghan-American businessman who was detained by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s (IEA) intelligence agency nearly two years ago.

The offer, issued through the State Department’s Rewards for Justice program on Monday, underscores growing concern over Habibi’s fate.

He was arrested on August 10, 2022, in Kabul. A former head of Afghanistan’s civil aviation authority under the previous Western-backed government, Habibi was reportedly detained along with his driver and 29 colleagues from a local telecommunications firm.

All but two — Habibi and another unnamed individual — have since been released.

“Habibi has not been heard from since his initial arrest, and the so-called Taliban (IEA) government has yet to provide any information regarding his whereabouts or

condition,” the department’s statement said.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which took power in August 2021 following the withdrawal of US and allied forces, has denied holding Habibi. Despite repeated requests from US officials and international rights organizations, no credible details about his status have emerged.

The Biden and now Trump administrations have made the recovery of US citizens detained abroad a key priority. The reward offer forms part of a broader effort by Washington to pressure the IEA and mobilize public cooperation to help locate Americans detained in conflict zones.

The State Department has urged individuals with relevant information to contact the Rewards for Justice program through secure and anonymous channels.

Habibi’s disappearance remains a sensitive issue in US-IEA relations, with American officials warning that unresolved detentions such as his pose a major obstacle to any meaningful engagement with the current Afghan authorities.

100 shops shut for price gouging in Ghazni



GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Authorities in the capital of southern Ghazni province have shut down more than 100 shops for arbitrarily increasing food prices under the pretext of the Iran-Israel conflict.

Abdul Wali Jalalzai, spokesman for the Ghazni Municipality, told Pajhwok Afghan News that over the past few days, numerous shops engaged in hoarding and selling goods at inflated prices have been closed.

He said certain traders and shopkeepers were exploiting the international situation—particularly rumors related to the Iran-Israel conflict—to unjustifiably hike food prices.

According to Jalalzai, several individuals have also been arrested on charges of price manipulation. They will be released

on bail after signing written commitments not to repeat the offense. He added that over 100 shops had been sealed so far, and assured the public that authorities were actively working to curb hoarding and would deal with violators in accordance with the law.

Abdul Jabbar, a resident of Ghazni City, told Pajhwok that many shopkeepers arbitrarily set prices and take advantage of crises for personal profit.

He said that last week, the price of nearly every essential food item had increased by around 300 afghanis, making them unaffordable for low-income families.

Jabbar urged the authorities to implement consistent and decisive measures to prevent unjustified price hikes and protect vulnerable communities.

Taliban build 12 religious schools as girls’ education remains restricted



KABUL (Amu TV): Over the last quarter, the Taliban have built 12 religious — often jihadist — schools across six provinces, according to data released by the Ministry of Education under their administration. Critics argue the schools represent a significant push toward ideological indoctrination of young people in the country.

Ministry figures show that construction took place in April, May, and June, with three schools complet-

ed in April, nine in May and one in early June, located in Ghazni, Paktia, Kandahar, Badakhshan, Faryab and Panjshir. Among these, one madrasa in Kandahar’s Daman district cost approximately \$17,500 to build, while another in Argun district, Paktika, had a reported investment of over \$11,500.

Human rights activists have voiced their concern. Abdul’Ahad’Farzad, an advocate for education rights, warned that “thousands of young men and

women” who graduate from these institutions are “equipped with extremist ideology but without the necessary skills for the job market or contributing to national development.”

The surge in these schools coincides with steep restrictions on girls’ education. Secondary schooling for girls beyond grade six remains banned, and universities remain closed to them. Sadaf, a student in Kabul, said: “The gates of school are

closed to us. I don’t understand our crime—we see boys and girls studying together in other countries, but in Afghanistan, girls from seventh grade onward are deprived of education.”

In a troubling escalation, several new madrasas are being constructed within military compounds in Badakhshan’s Kuran and Manjan districts. At the same time, the Taliban’s Higher Education Ministry has awarded bachelor’s and master’s diplomas to approximately 2,500 graduates of religious seminaries, including instructors at the Darul Uloom Haqqani.

Analysts caution that while these schools may fill gaps left by a faltering public education system, they also risk deepening extremist ideology at the expense of broader learning and economic opportunity. With girls still barred from education and curricula focused on religious instruction, Afghanistan’s youth may face mounting obstacles to participation in the workforce and broader society.

UN warns of severe humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): UN officials report Afghanistan faces severe humanitarian needs, with widespread hunger, malnutrition, water shortages, and educational restrictions, especially for girls.

Joyce Msuya, the UN Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, highlighted the ongoing and severe humanitarian needs

facing the people of Afghanistan. Speaking at the UN Security Council on Monday, June 23, she outlined how decades of conflict, structural poverty, climate crises, and the severe restrictions on women and girls have worsened the country’s crisis.

Msuya noted that Afghanistan’s maternal mortality rate is more than 2.5 times the global average, while widespread drought contin-

ues to threaten large parts of the country. She also emphasized that one in five Afghans faces hunger, and three million people are severely malnourished, with nearly 3.7 million children unable to attend school.

Among those affected by educational restrictions, Msuya pointed out that 2.2 million girls over the age of 11 are prohibited from attending school due to the Taliban’s policies. These ongoing barriers significantly impact the future of Afghanistan’s youth, especially girls, who face the brunt of the educational crisis.

Msuya also warned that Kabul may become the first capital city in modern history to face severe water shortages. She revealed that groundwater levels in Kabul have dropped by 30 meters, and nearly half of the city’s wells have run dry, exacerbating the growing water crisis.

In her remarks, Msuya stressed the vital role of Afghanistan’s women in humanitarian operations. Despite facing numerous threats and restrictions, Afghan women continue to serve on the frontlines of humanitarian aid, reaching marginalized communities that would otherwise be left without support.

Msuya further highlighted that the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund has recently allocated \$2.4 million to local organizations, including those often overlooked. This financial support is crucial to maintaining vital services amid ongoing challenges.

Dorothy Shea, the US Ambassador to the UN, also addressed the meeting, stating that the Afghanistan’s people continue to suffer from poverty, unemployment, lack of basic services, and the impacts of natural disasters.

T20 cricket tournament kicks off



GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): A twenty/20 cricket tournament titled “Ghazi District Cup” has begun featuring 10 teams from eight districts and Ghazni city of

southern Ghazni province, an official said on Tuesday. Head of Cricket Abdul Wadoud Paktiawal told Pajhwok Afghan News the 12-match tournament wou-

ld last for about 15 days.

“These 10 teams have been divided into two groups, each team would play four matches, and the top two teams from each

group would advance to the semi-finals”, he added.

The competition is aimed at developing cricket, finding young talents and strengthening brotherhood between districts. Paktiawal hoped this would introduce young talents to Afghan domestic cricket.

On the other hand, athletes, happy with the tournament, called for holding more such events.

Matiullah Foad, a player from the Raees Club team, told Pajhwok they were facing problems due to lack of a stadium. He said: “There are no standard grounds, where we can play with confidence”.

Foad urged the government to pay serious attention to stadiums and sports facilities.

Heat and poverty drive illness

KANDAHAR (Amu TV): A combination of extreme heat and widespread poverty is fueling a surge in seasonal illnesses among children in Kandahar Province, where temperatures have climbed above 40°C (104°F). For many families in Daman District, the crisis deepens daily.

Mothers here report that their children are suffering from heat exhaustion and other seasonal ailments, but they cannot afford medical

care. “My toddler is very sick, and I have no money for treatment,” said Hafiza, a mother in Daman. “Clinics are closed, and they won’t treat us.”

With international aid to Afghanistan recently reduced, local health services have deteriorated sharply. Where free medicine and basic treatments were once available, now there is little to no support.

“The clinics that used to give us free medicine are

gone,” said Omra Gul, another resident. “Not a single packet of tablets is provided anymore. Our economic situation is terrible.”

She added: “All our children are sick. Clinics are closed, and we have no financial means.”

Daman is one of the most populous districts in Kandahar and is beset by long-term economic hardship. Many families live under the Taliban-run health ministry, which suffers

from chronic staff shortages and limited medical supplies. Temperatures above 40°C make infants especially vulnerable; mothers say they resort to splashing water on their children’s faces to provide brief relief.

Local officials and aid groups warn that without urgent intervention—such as mobile clinics, medical outreach, or financial assistance—the health of the district’s children could deteriorate further.

NA approves over Rs26.99b grants for Commerce Division

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Tuesday approved two demands for grants of over Rs. 26.99 to cover the Commerce Division's expenditure for the financial year ending June 30, 2026.

Finance and Revenue Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presented the demands in the House, which were passed with majority support. The 67 cut motions moved by the opposition members were rejected.

The House approved a sum not exceeding Rs. 26,948,574,000 to meet expenditure during the financial year ending on 30th June, 2026 in respect of commerce division and a sum not exceeding Rs. 50,000,000 for development expenditure of commerce division.

Winding up the debate on cut motions in the National Assembly, Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan said the government's \$60 billion export target is backed by years of planning, consultations, and reforms—not mere imagination.

The minister said the Strategic Trade Policy Framework (STPF) 2024–30 was shaped through consultations with 17 sectoral councils and included officials from the federal and provincial governments.

"We identified challenges in each sector, proposed legal and institutional reforms, and created a clear roadmap," he said.

He dismissed claims that the policy was designed in isolation, adding that a full analysis

of global trade patterns and local institutions was conducted. "Our policy reflects ground realities and has clear steps to achieve the \$60 billion goal," he said.

The minister said the private sector was fully engaged in the planning process. "We addressed key issues like production costs, taxation, and monetary policy to make the environment business-friendly," he added.

He announced that Pakistan's commercial attachés abroad have been renamed as Trade and Investment Officers (TIOs), and are now selected through a competitive process involving private sector representatives.

"For the first time, we are launching an Electronic Trade Analysis Portal," the minister said.

TIOs will use the portal to report daily on performance, outreach, and investment opportunities. Their work will be measured through strict KPIs and TORs.

He stressed that transparency, accountability, and efficiency are now central to trade governance. "Our export policy is now built on real-time action, not just paperwork," he said.

Highlighting export performance, the minister said Pakistan recorded a five-year high in Basmati rice exports this year. "Even with India returning to the market and slashing prices by 15–20 percent, our rice exports held firm at \$3.3 billion," he said.

He clarified that Pakistan's total exports are closer to \$30 billion, contrary to some claims of \$27

billion. The minister said TIO postings are now made through a transparent, merit-based process, ending past practices of favoritism. "Now, skilled officers are sent to critical markets, and their performance is closely tracked," he added.

He also announced a new online portal where TIOs submit reports and are evaluated daily, weekly, and monthly.

Dr. Jam Kamal announced the formation of Pakistan's first National Compliance Council to help exporters—especially SMEs—meet global standards. A dedicated head has been appointed, and training is underway.

For the first time, the Commerce Ministry has also appointed a Head of Research to guide deci-

sions based on solid data and market trends.

The minister said Pakistan is preparing its first-ever Domestic Commerce Policy to promote local production. "We can't increase exports without building local surplus," he said.

He also stressed that agro-food and food technology have been identified as key export areas. "We're bringing food tech into our export policy to meet global market needs," he added.

On GSP Plus, the minister said preparations are underway with involvement from the Law, Interior ministries, and provincial governments. Local and international firms are providing consultancy services for compliance.

Institutions like the

Export Development Fund (EDF) and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), once inactive, have been restructured. EDF now has a full team, a CEO, and a technical assistance wing. Performance reports will soon be presented to Parliament.

The federal budget, he noted, offers relief to domestic manufacturers, particularly those using local raw materials. Regulatory Duties and other levies are being phased out under a five-year industrial plan.

He said a steering committee led by the finance minister is monitoring industry reforms, with regular meetings every 10–15 days. The committee includes ministers of commerce, petroleum, and food security.

The minister noted that Pakistan achieved \$8 billion in agro-food exports last year—its highest ever. "This came despite falling global demand, dropping interest rates, and inflation now in single digits," he said.

He added that the government is focused on strengthening value chains, reforming export facilitation schemes, and upgrading port and shipping infrastructure. The Prime Minister himself is supervising efforts to streamline FBR reforms and the Single Window Initiative.

"We are implementing major reforms in trade and industry. With every passing month, you'll see measurable improvement in both performance and outcomes," the minister added.

NDMA urges vigilance as rain, thunderstorms loom over

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Tuesday urged citizens to remain cautious, as isolated rainfall, thunderstorms, and windstorms are forecast for Islamabad and several areas across Punjab from June 25 to July 1.

In an impact-based weather report issued by the National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of NDMA, weather conditions across various regions of Pakistan, have been outlined for the period from 25th June to 1st July 2025.

These alerts indicate the likelihood of thunderstorms, windstorms, and flash floods in different parts of the country, posing potential threats to public safety, infrastructure, and transportation systems.

Isolated rainfall, thunderstorms, and windstorms are expected in Islamabad and most parts of Punjab, including Rawalpindi, Murree, Galliat, Attock,

Chakwal, Jhelum, Mianwali, Hafizabad, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Okara, Lahore, Gujranwala, Multan, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and adjoining areas.

These conditions may lead to uprooting of weak trees, temporary power outages, and damage to vulnerable structures, rooftops, vehicles, and electric lines.

Citizens are advised to avoid standing near trees, signboards, or weak structures and to park vehicles in covered, secure locations.

NEOC also highlighted the risk of flash flooding in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, isolated thunderstorms and rainfall are expected in Chitral, Dir, Haripur, Karak, Kohat, Kohistan, Khyber, Kurram, Mansehra, Mohmand, Nowshera, Malakand, Charsadda, Abbottabad, Bannu, Buner, Hazara, Peshawar, Swabi, Swat, Waziristan, and nearby areas. Strong winds and thunderstorms may affect widespread moderate to heavy rainfall, with chances of very heavy downpours at isolated places, is forecast.

This may cause flash

floods in local streams and nullahs, disrupt road access in hilly areas, and lead to landslides. The risk to property, infrastructure, and public safety in flood-prone and low-lying areas is significant.

Residents in vulnerable locations are urged to exercise caution, avoid unnecessary travel, and secure household belongings and livestock.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, isolated thunderstorms and rainfall are expected in Chitral, Dir, Haripur, Karak, Kohat, Kohistan, Khyber, Kurram, Mansehra, Mohmand, Nowshera, Malakand, Charsadda, Abbottabad, Bannu, Buner, Hazara, Peshawar, Swabi, Swat, Waziristan, and nearby areas. Strong winds and thunderstorms may affect widespread moderate to heavy rainfall, with chances of very heavy downpours at isolated places, is forecast.

Additionally, isolated rainfall and thunderstorms

are likely in Gilgit-Baltistan, including Astore, Skardu, Hunza, Shigar, Ghizer, Ghanche, Diamer, Nagar, Gilgit, and surrounding areas from 26th to 29th June 2025. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), including Bagh, Rawalakot, Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Haveli, and Hattian Bala, isolated heavy rainfall and thunderstorms are expected from 25th June to 1st July 2025, with occasional gaps.

NDMA strongly urges all citizens, travelers, and relevant departments to take precautionary measures and remain vigilant throughout this period.

Emergency response units are advised to stay on alert for possible rescue and evacuation operations. Public is encouraged to stay informed by regularly checking weather updates and downloading the "Pak NDMA Disaster Alert" mobile application for real-time information and advisories.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif hosting a dinner in honour of high level diplomatic delegation headed by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari that recently visited important world capitals to highlight Pakistan's perspective on the recent Indian aggression.

Zelenskiy warns NATO allies before Hague summit of Russia threat

THE HAGUE (Reuters): President Volodymyr Zelenskiy warned European NATO members on Tuesday that they risked being attacked by Russia if it was not defeated in Ukraine, urging them to heed U.S. calls to sign off a big new spending goal for the alliance at a summit.

The two-day gathering is intended to signal to Russian President Vladimir Putin that NATO is united, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's past criticism, and determined to expand and upgrade its defences to deter any attack from Moscow.

"Russia is even planning new military operations on NATO territory—meaning your countries," Zelenskiy told a defence industry event on the sidelines of the summit, hours after Russian missiles killed at least 11 people in southeast Ukraine.

"No doubt we must stop Putin now, and in Ukraine, but we have to understand that his objectives reach

beyond Ukraine. European countries need to increase defence spending."

Trump, en route to the summit in the Netherlands, posted a screenshot of a message from NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte congratulating him on his "decisive action in Iran" and getting all NATO allies to agree to spend at least 5% of their GDP on defence.

"Europe is going to pay in a BIG way as they should, and it will be your win," the message read.

Trump was pressed by travelling reporters to say whether he remained committed to mutual defence among allies as set out by NATO's Article 5, and responded:

"I'm committed to saving lives. I'm committed to life and safety. And I'm going to give you an exact definition when I get there." Trump is expected to meet Zelenskiy for talks during the summit. Zelenskiy has said he wants to discuss substantial purchases of weaponry

including Patriot missile defence systems as well as sanctions and other ways to put pressure on Putin.

In The Hague, Zelenskiy said it was essential that Ukraine lead in drone technology, which has shaped the battlefield and developed at breathtaking pace in the 40 months the war has lasted so far.

Rutte, a former Dutch prime minister, underlined the need for transatlantic cooperation in the defence industry.

"Today, NATO's military edge is being aggressively challenged by a rapidly rearming Russia, backed by Chinese technology and armed with Iranian and North Korean weapons," he said.

"Only Europe and North America together can rise up to meet the challenge of rearmament."

The Kremlin accused NATO of being on a path of rampant militarisation and portraying Russia as a "fiend of hell" in order to justify its big increase in defence spending.

The summit and its final statement will be focused on heeding Trump's call to spend 5% of GDP on defence - a significant jump from the current 2% goal. It is to be achieved both by spending more on military items and by including broader security-related spending in the new target.

Russia has cited its neighbour's desire to join the U.S.-led transatlantic defence pact as one of the reasons why it invaded Ukraine in 2022.

NATO was founded by 12 Western countries in 1949 to resist the threat from the communist Soviet Union.

Russia denies any plan to attack the alliance, which now boasts 32 members, but Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was "largely a wasted effort" to assure the grouping of this because it was determined to demonise Russia.

"It is an alliance created for confrontation ... It is not an instrument of peace and stability," he said.

China's Xi urges Singapore leader to resist 'hegemony'

BEIJING (AFP): Chinese President Xi Jinping called on Singapore's prime minister to join the fight against "hegemony" and protectionism in trade as they met in Beijing on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong's first official visit to China lasts until Thursday.

He met Xi on Tuesday morning at Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People, with the Chinese leader urging their two countries to work to "stand on the right side of history and on the side of fairness and justice," according to state broadcaster CCTV.

He told Wong that "the world cannot return to

hegemony or be dragged back to the law of the jungle," a veiled swipe at the United States, after President Donald Trump launched a barrage of tariffs this year on countries including China and Singapore.

Wong, in turn, told Xi he believed the Singapore-China relationship was "more important than before" in a time of "global turbulence and uncertainty."

"We can work together to establish closer ties and... continue to strengthen multilateralism and the rules-based global order for the benefit of all countries," Wong said.

Wong, who succeeded Lee Hsien Loong, the son of founding premier Lee Kuan Yew, in 2024, has warned the trade-dependent city-state could be hit hard by Trump's tariffs.

Although Trump imposed a baseline 10 percent tariff on Singapore, the country is vulnerable to a global economic slowdown caused by the much higher levies on dozens of other countries because of its heavy reliance on international trade.

Following his meetings in Beijing, Wong will head to the northern Chinese city of Tianjin for a meeting of the World Economic Forum.

Aleema slams KP MPAs for passing budget without Imran's nod

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Aleema Khan, sister of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, slammed the party MPAs on Tuesday for passing the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget without Imran Khan's consultation.

She said those members who could not resist pressure should 'go home' as the party required bold and courageous stance on key issues for the release of its founder.

Talking to the media outside Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, she also claimed that Pakistan has been currently under 'martial law' not a hybrid system.

Addressing journalists, Aleema Khan emphasized that social media represents the voice of the public, while mainstream media faces its own constraints. She relayed Imran Khan's stance that the KP budget should not have been passed without his approval. When asked about a "minus Imran" scenario, she responded, "I think the minus Imran Khan has already happened."

Responding to a question about KP MPAs claiming they could not oppose Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur due to his influence, Aleema Khan said, "Those MPAs who can't bear the burden should go home."

On the 'compulsion' behind passing the budget, she said Imran Khan had instructed the party to approach the Supreme Court to challenge how a budget could be approved without the party leader's consent.

She added "Imran Khan believes Pakistan is under martial law, not a hybrid system mentioning who controls the authority to let anyone meet with Imran Khan in jail, revealing that even she is often denied permission to meet him."

She urged Pakistanis to learn from Iran's example and stand up for their rights and the rule of law.

It merits mentioning that the KP Assembly approved the provincial budget for the new fiscal year late last night, despite Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur not consulting Imran Khan beforehand.

Trump says China can continue to buy Iranian oil

WASHINGTON (AFP): China can continue to buy Iranian oil, US President Donald Trump said Tuesday in what appeared to be relief for Tehran from sanctions Washington has previously imposed to punish the trade.

"China can now continue to purchase Oil from Iran. Hopefully, they will be purchasing plenty from the US, also," Trump wrote in a post on his Truth Social platform as he travelled to a NATO summit in The Hague.

China's position as the main buyer of Iranian oil has served as a crucial lifeline for Tehran as its economy is battered by crippling international sanctions.

Beijing buys more than 90 percent of Iran's oil exports, according to the analysis firm Kpler.

It imported 1.3 million barrels of Iranian crude oil a day in April, down from a five-month high in March.

Last month the United States announced fresh sanctions on Iranian oil sales to Beijing, however, as

Trump's administration continued its "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

China has condemned recent US bombing strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities and called for parties in the region, "especially Israel," to de-escalate.

And it has called for a political solution to help a declared ceasefire hold.

But analysts say that the fighting between Israel and Iran has severely reduced Beijing's regional leverage.

PM lauds NAB's performance, pledges full support

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday met with Chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Lt. Gen. (R) Nazir Ahmad Butt, who presented the NAB Performance Report for the years 2023-2024 during a meeting held here at the Prime Minister's Office.

The comprehensive report included detailed information on the recoveries and overall performance of NAB's headquarters and regional offices over the past two years, a PM Office news release said.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif commended NAB's role in the national fight against corruption, reaffirming that eliminating corruption and misuse of authority remains one of the government's top priorities.

"The vision of a corruption-free Pakistan will be realized, and NAB will be provided with all necessary resources and facilities to achieve this goal," the prime minister stated.

The PM also directed NAB to expedite the disposal of pending cases and emphasized the need for effective measures to assist victims of financial fraud and ensure swift recovery of their lost funds.

Briefing the Prime Minister, the Chairman NAB highlighted the bureau's recent achievements, noting that over the past two years, NAB

had recovered billions of rupees in embezzled public funds and retrieved hundreds of acres of illegally occupied state land valued at billions.

According to the report, NAB concluded 700 inquiries, completed 218 investigations, and filed 21 new references during the 2023-2024 period.

Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar, was also present during the meeting.